CROESO I GYMRU

by Jeffery Harrison

The SHOOTING TIMES

and Country Magazine

Incorporating FIELD SPORTS

SEVENTY-SIXTH YEAR | FRIDAY, JULY 18th, 1958 | 1s. 3d. WEEKLY

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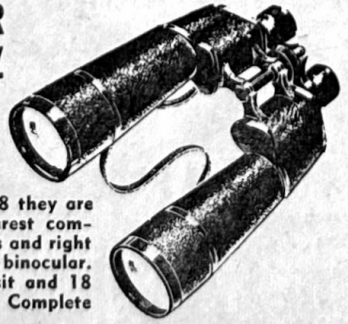

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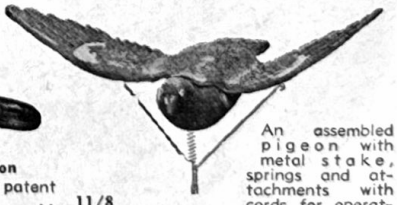

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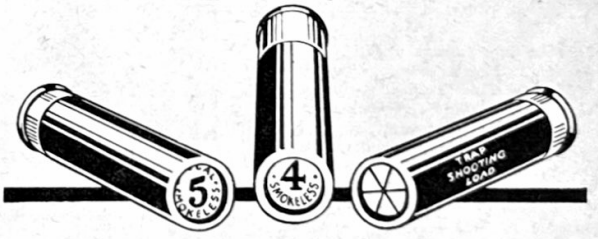

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A YEAR OF REVIVAL

THERE can be few countries which regard their field sports as of so little national importance as we do. Unsubsidised and unsupported by grants, denied even a proportion of the taxes spent in their name by those who take part in them, hunting shooting and fishing depend almost entirely on voluntary subscription and effort for their existence, and it is a measure of the strength of their supporters that they continue to flourish in spite of all the difficulties engendered by modern conditions and also in in face of adverse comment and false propaganda engineered by opposing factions.

Individually the sportsman has always been notoriously apathetic about the machinations of the anti-sport fraternity. Only recently has he begun to realise how near to disaster has he come on more than one occasion due to this apathy. That his present state is no worse, is due entirely to those Associations that keep a watchful eye on his interests, scotching false rumour and disseminating the truth about field sports to an ignorant public, and martialling the scattered forces of lethargic followers into concerted action when the constant sniping of the antis develops into battle.

Foremost among these guardians of sport is the British Field Sports Society. In the past this organisation has been the butt of considerable criticism by its members as well as those who have declined to join it in the belief that it was a society for the preservation of field sports in name only, and that action of any sort was sadly lacking. This was hardly surprising in view of the little public evidence of the Society's activities. It is heartening to read, therefore, the latest annual report of the B.F.S.S. in which we are reminded that the past twelve months have been among the busiest in the Society's history, and that most of the effort has been directed towards intensive public relations work. It was this that was very largely responsible for the defeat of Sir Frederick Messer's Bill seeking the prohibition of staghunting.

One of the most important phases of the public relations campaign was the "build up" of the Society as the authoritative source of intelligence on field sports, and much has been achieved in this direction.

Supporters of field sports frequently ask why it is not possible to persuade the popular daily Press to give "our side" of the hunting story more prominence. The answer is that only a small proportion of the population is actively interested in hunting. Popular daily newspapers are concerned only with finding and printing stories which will amuse and entertain their readers, and hunting, unfortunately frequently provides them with suitable material. The opportunity of presenting people, who occupy positions of authority, in an undignified light has a strong appeal to the Press. As a rule there is only one hunting story which interests the popular daily Press and that is a bad one from the sportsman's point of view.

The battle to preserve field sports will always be a defensive one, but this does not mean that the B.F.S.S. will lose any opportunity of taking the offensive whenever possible. Revitalised and with an increased membership as a result, the Society deserves the staunch support of every sportsman, for it must never be supposed that the recent defeat of the anti-staghunting Bill will deter extremist elements from further attacks on field sports.

THE SHOOTING TIMES AND COUNTRY MAGAZINE

Incorporating FIELD SPORTS

Official Organ of THE WILDFOWLERS' ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

No. 3958 FRIDAY, JULY 18, 1958 Founded 1882

The wild life of today is not ours to dispose of as we please. We have it in trust, We must account for it to those who come after.—King George VI.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Game Fair

All being well this time next week I shall be at Stetchworth for the Game Fair, where I shall remain until Saturday evening. Judging by the programme, I shall need a couple of days to make a close inspection of every exhibit. The primary object of the Game Fair is to help the farmer and small landowner who is keen on shooting to create and look after a small shoot along with his neighbours at moderate cost.

Demonstrations of modern methods of rearing and managing game birds will therefore be a prominent feature of the Fair. Birds, brooders, pens, feeding stuffs and other equipment will be on show on a large rearing field, and commentaries will be given on these exhibits. There will be a continuous showing of films relating to game management, and an information service will be provided by the I.C.I. Game Research Department.

In addition there will be clay pigeon and small-bore shooting competitions, a falconry display, archery, gundog tests, pests control exhibits by the Ministry of Agriculture, an exhibition of horse-drawn and mechanical transport used for carrying game and guns since the end of the last century and a varied selection of trade stands and exhibits by sporting organisations. One of the latter that will make a special appeal to many readers of this journal is the stand of the Wildfowlers' Association of Great Britain and Ireland, especially in this Golden Jubilee year of the Association. It is hoped that as many members of W.A.G.B.I. and its affiliated clubs as possible will visit this stand, and I would urge all fowlers who are not already individual members of W.A.G.B.I. to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary by taking out a subscription on the stand. Good reasons for doing so will be obvious on seeing the exhibit.

I shall make the W.A.G.B.I. stand my "firm base" and hope to meet many friends, old and new there on Friday and Saturday. Anyone with a message for *The Shooting Times* is invited to leave it at the Wildfowlers' Association exhibit.

Glass Eyes

When discussing the stuffing of elephants and smaller deer with Mr. Gerald Best, a director of Rowland Ward, recently, I took the opportunity of asking a question which often comes our way from amateur taxidermists. Where are glass eyes obtainable?

The answer was not very encouraging. Before the war, the chief source of supply was Eastern Germany, but imports from that area are now out of the question. As a result, even the professionals experience great difficulty in obtaining glass eyes, and for the most part, Rowland Ward make their own. That this is not so simple as it sounds, is revealed when we recall that eighty pairs of pickled eyes were examined before a choice was made from which the final optics to grace the Brussels Exhibition elephant were copied.

If any reader knows of a reliable source of glass eyes suitable for taxidermy purposes, I shall be glad to hear from him.

Ireland's Five Year Plan

Bord Fáilte Eireann, the Irish Tourist Board, has invited three-man teams from selected areas in Britain to visit Ireland on a fishing holiday as guests of the Board to check on coarse fishing and sea angling facilities in various centres in Ireland, as part of the Five Year Plan for Fishing Development (1957-1962) to open up angling waters and to provide facilities for boats, baits and accommodation.

Sea angling as a sport has never been fully exploited in Ireland, but many centres, as a result of recent developments, are now able to offer first-class facilities, and it is expected that eventually sea angling will become a major tourist attraction.

As Ireland offers unlimited free coarse fishing it is not surprising that angling is now very popular with visiting anglers from Britain, France and the Continent.

World Shooting Championships

Following a series of trial shoots, the following have been selected to represent Great Britain in the clay pigeon events in the World Shooting Championships at Moscow in August:

15-trap. Messrs. G. Jones (captain), W. Blamire, C. R. Booth, V. B. Huthart, A. Pratt and C. Wilson (reserve).

Skeet. Messrs. G. Jones, A. Pratt and C. Wilson.

Thanks are extended to the Bisley and North Wales Gun Clubs for providing facilities for the 15-trap trials, and to the Bedford and Leicester Gun Clubs for Skeet, while our best wishes for success go out to the selected teams.

A.C.A. in Ireland

It is possible that a branch of the A.C.A. may be formed in the North of Ireland in the not too distant future.

Mr. R. Erskine-Hill, Director of the Association, has recently been in Belfast at the request of the Ulster Federation of Anglers and has explained to them how the A.C.A. functions in England, Scotland and Wales.

AUCEPS.

It is not difficult to force a path through mere rushes such as these.

A DAY BY THE WAY

by Tower-Bird

WORKING ahead for reasons of my own, I am writing this article on Sunday, June 29, though it will not appear until July 18. It is, therefore, in retrospect, although few of us in the valley of the Arun can have forgotten the big floods of the last week-end in June.

On the morning of June 28, I started out early for some rough shooting I have on the hills. My intention was to spend the morning "ride-cutting," or, rather, since this was in the open, the trimming of paths through a tangle of brambles, briars, nettles, docks, thistles and all the rest of it. Usually I take a sharp double-edged knife with me, finding this weapon sufficient to knock off the delicate feelers of brambles, the hollow stalks of thistles, etc. But such has been the heavy growth of the enemy this spring that I took a fagging-hook along, and, though I can hardly type this morning with hands and arms numb from nettle-stings, I am well satisfied with the work carried out. When duck shooting starts in September, I shall be able to walk through almost head-high cover to this and that spot (for I trimmed marshland paths as well), and my way through the tangled growth of upland pigeon country is now almost luxurious.

Visiting the scene of coming operations on the previous evening, I noted how, at 7.30, a fairish flock of pigeon came into roost where, hitherto, there had only been the odd one. I shot five without moving from where I stood. So, although going trimming next day, I took a belt of 25 cartridges with me, instead of just a few in my pocket.

On my way up to the hills I shot a pigeon as I like best to shoot them—red-handed. As I approached a hedge, it flapped up from a cottage garden, where it had been tearing at newly-planted brussels, and flew straight towards me, a few feet off the ground. In fact, it seemed to me to be flying away, but suddenly it dawned on me that it was coming at me. It swooped upwards into an elm almost over my head, from which I blasted it at short range.

Exit the Magpie Brood

I did not get another shot on the high ground, but on my way to the next bit of ground in lower country, I called in at a private house whose owner lets me have a very small, though profitable bit of shooting, and here I found a magpie's nest in a low bush, and fired two shots into it at almost point-blank range, having seen something move in it. As I shot, a bird hopped from a branch to another in an ash tree close by, and I saw that it was a young maggie. I did not hesitate, but fired at it, bringing it down—alas, with a flycatcher which must have been sitting on an outside twig along the path of the shot. I had two more young magpies from the ash, and though I waited in hiding for nearly an hour for the old birds to show up, I neither saw nor heard them.

Some readers may remember that, the year before last, I mentioned a flock of pigeon, feeding on a marsh, which used three tall willows, and how I sat under these one morning and shot a considerable number of birds. Others returned again and again, all in pairs. Last year, this spot was a failure, and I had not bothered about it this year as, up till now, we have had no pigeon to speak of in our actual area. But this morning, as I worked at trimming, I saw a flock of well over three hundred fly up into the willows, and it struck me that this flock had been driven off a certain marsh by flooding, for, today, there were miles of marshland under water.

A Long, Hard Trail

Over the river and beyond, as far as the eye could see, was a vast lake. Between me and the river there was what appeared to be ordinary rough grass, from the distance, but which, in fact, was a sodden mass of very heavy-crop grass—a tangled mass even when it was standing upright, and now bent low by gale and rain and the weight of water in which it stood, well over knee-deep where the ground was flat, and waist-deep and more in the hollows. As I approached the willows, I forced a way through rushes and all manner of tall plants which were shoulder-high at the lowest points, and over head-high in many places. I could hear the quite frightening din of rushing water, as the tide made and the floods deepened, sending the water across my path at the foot of the undergrowth. I had to "feel" my way for four hundred yards in case I stepped in one of the many low spots hollowed out by the rush of water.

I had not been under the willows more than twenty minutes before I ran out of cartridges, having missed five pigeon out of fifteen. Then I set about a return home through the deepening water hidden in the drowned crop. After a quarter-of-a-mile I came to a dipping track between two gate-posts, and here it was now impossible to cross. I waded a few more hundred yards to another spot, but found this deeper still, and the tide was now pouring up the open, flooded dyke. A third place where I thought it possible I might cross was my "last resort," and, taking off my heavy bag of pigeon, I tucked my empty cartridge belt into it and put the lot on my head. For the next twenty yards the water was up to my arm-pits, and felt very cold, for the exercise through the heavy water-logged crop had hotted me up some'at. There followed shortly afterwards a distribution of pigeon and the intake of free ale, then home to change.

Death of a Raider

That evening, I went in pursuit, after the sun had set, of a couple of pigeon which had visited my allotment and which I knew to be roosting in a fringe of willows set round an elm copse. I was surprised to find on arrival there, that the birds were absent, but I had not been waiting more than twenty minutes when a single pigeon arrived, to settle low down among the scraggy boughs of a willow about twenty yards from me. Slowly I raised the gun, and—click! I pressed the other trigger—click! The pigeon seemed to be staring side-faced right at me, and had obviously heard the clicks. Slowly I felt in my belt, opened the breech of the empty gun and inserted a single cartridge, closed the gun with another click, raised it and shot the pigeon. Any quick movement would undoubtedly have scared the bird.

It was deep dusk, when I reached the allotments for a final look-round, and just then I was surprised to hear a pigeon coo-ing down by the edge of the marsh. I had to make a wide detour to reach the spot, by way of the village street. I crept down the "track" (save the word!) to the tree in which I guessed the bird to be, through a jungle of thistles, nettles and willow-herb. My advance was covered by a whitethorn, and presently I peered carefully round this, seeing my pigeon on a low, bare bough poking among the feathers under his wing with its beak. It did not know that it died!

And so ended a blitz on newly-arrived nesting pigeon, and I hope to have another blitz on them next week-end when I have given them time to settle down. Only those which pay our allotments a visit will be shot at dawn, or during the evening. Now, as I write, my hands and arms, as I have said, are numb from nettle-stings and I still have a number of thistle-bits to get out of my fingers. I was stiff when I woke through the unusual effort of wading through a mass of grass set in a lake of water. My eyes are bleary with the dust and pollen of grasses and other herbage, and I still seem to hear the infernal and continuous buzzing of flies which all morning assailed my head and face as I worked.

But I now know that, come wet or come fair, I shall have paths cut through the jungle which is a pleasant though small rough shoot, and through certain other jungles in the marshland which I can follow when shooting, without having to force a way through clinging brambles and trailing herbage, stung by nettles and pricked by thistles, burrs and teasels. Green stuff may still grow about my pathways, but nothing which cannot be pushed or kicked out of the way without fuss . . . And Don, glued to my heel, will not suffer the stinging of the damned.

Anyhow, and despite the heat and flooding, June 28 was a great little day—if only a day by the way.

* * *

I called last night at the self-service cafeteria at Victoria station for a cup o' char. On the service counter was a large notice: SUGAR AVAILABLE IN THE POURER DISPENSERS ON THE TABLES. I went today to my gunmaker and surprised him by asking for a carton of cylindrical containers filled with 27 grains of granulated explosive and spherical globules, No. 5, for shotguns (use in). Good morning!

Croeso I Gymru

by Jeffery Harrison

CROESO i Gymru—Welcome to Wales—so reads a roadsign on the border just outside Presteigne. It is a roadsign full of meaning for the sportsman, who will find, as we have found, that a very real welcome awaits him in Wales. It was David Walker who first introduced us to the wilds of Wales. David and I had been medical students together, had both been members of "The Guttersnipes," a Cambridge wildfowling club and had shared the thrills of the Elbe, while doing our National Service, before David returned to practice in Radnorshire.

Very soon after I returned, David was in touch to know if I could join him on Black Mixen Moor to try for my first grouse. That "12th" lived up to its reputation of being "glorious"—in fact it was the hottest for 12 years and the moors were at their best with the purple of the heather broken here and there by patches of brilliant yellow dwarf gorse and we looked across the Vale of Radnor, far below us, to the Black Mountains.

We were a party of five guns and were walking up, assisted by an equal number of followers, not all of whom survived. Pam and I were engaged at the time, so she survived, but still talks about the effort involved! There is nothing like knee high heather, small peat bogs and holes on a grilling hot day to try out prospective wives! It was a great day and we returned exhausted with 9½ brace of grouse and a snipe. I can still remember each of mine, including an opening right and left, which is more than can be said for the big day. Buzzards and kestrels were common on the tops

Snipe jumping.

and at one time 38 ravens were croaking and tumbling above us. Our humble results eventually featured in the "Reports from the Moors," if only to let people know that there were still grouse in Radnorshire!

There were said to be a few blackcock in the fir woods of the Forestry Commission below the moors, and with the vast acres of fir and larch now being planted by them in Wales, perhaps we shall see a welcome increase. At present these depressingly dark woods provide sanctuary for foxes, crows, magpies and jays, while polecats are said to be increasing. The problem of keepering these woodlands is a very real one and I fail to see how the Commission can expect to let their shooting rights, until they are prepared to take a more active interest in vermin control. They may then develop something that is worth renting.

Our next visit to David was almost a year later. It was in the summer and we thought we would like to see a red kite. We had some difficulty in finding out just where was the best place to go, added to which our chosen day dawned with a south-westerly gale and the hills were obscurred with low cloud, so we were not particularly hopeful. When we arrived in the area we found that it was all too easy to see "kites" and that buzzards performing their aerial evolutions in the high winds were most deceptive. One making a quick turn deceived us both into seeing a "forked" tail, but then it hovered—a typical buzzard!

At last, towards the end of the day, we were motoring slowly down a considerable hill when a large hawk flew along the valley ahead. I stopped the car with a jerk and jumped out with the field glasses, closely followed by Pam. This time there was no mistaking the forked tail and in the moment of triumph the car began to move off down the hill, as in our excitement we had failed to put the brake well on. So we enjoyed a wonderful if somewhat strenuous view of the kite, as we lent backwards against the bonnet of the car to stop it from leaving us! The kite flew along the hillside below us, its lovely chestnut plumage in contrast to the green oakwood behind.

Robbing the Kites

It seems incredible that there should still be egg-collectors to rob the kites, and yet when we were riding over the mountains with a Welsh hill farmer, he showed us a wood in which a pair had nested quite recently, but the clutch was taken in spite of all precautions by guards. It is almost as shocking as the osprey's eggs taken this spring in Scotland, as reported in *The Times*. Both were replaced by hen's eggs, darkened with boot polish, the two fertile osprey's eggs being found later lying broken at the foot of the nesting tree.

The snipe shooting in Pembrokeshire is only rivalled by that in Eire. Once again David made the necessary contacts for three of us to spend two January days energetically working the bogs, in company with Henry Wright. The open weather had not brought in any large number of snipe and most of those we saw rose wild, so that we improvised a number of miniature drives. Henry, who knows his snipe, favoured walking them downwind, because they should be sitting in the lee of reed tufts, and it certainly worked. I do not believe that snipe have to jump into the wind. Birds rise into the wind to get the necessary uplift under their wings, but the long legs of the snipe provide enough spring to enable it to fly off downwind immediately, if necessary.

Flood water made the going very tricky and every so often we went through the quaking surface, almost invariably as a snipe jumped. Four pairs of breeches proved just right for two days!

At one farm we saw a heap of several hundred rabbit traps, rusting and rotting away. It was a sad sight and the farmer told us he was making £400 a year from trapped rabbits before myxomatosis. All the time we were shooting, great numbers of small birds, finches, larks, jackdaws, green plovers and starlings were flying westwards and we could see them setting off across St. George's Channel bound for Eire. Ray the third member of our party is a keen amateur meteriologist and on the way down he assurred us that he had studied the weather maps, but could see no hope of an approaching cold front. The birds knew better and on the day we left Pembrokeshire, the Arctic weather of 1956 broke with full fury. We drove home to Kent into a blizzard, imagining streams of snipe flying in the opposite direction above us!

The next time we saw Pembrokeshire was this spring and I now understand why no one can say they know Pembrokeshire unless they have seen it in spring. This time we explored the magnificent cliffs look out to the islands of Skokholm, with its nesting manx shearwaters and stormy petrels; Skomer, with its own distinct vole, and distant Grassholm, famed for

Polecat with young rabbit. Drawn by David Harrison from a specimen obtained this year at Brynmelif, Radnorshire.

its gannetry. Unfortunately rough seas prevented us from visiting any of these islands. The cliffs were tremendously colourful with the yellows of dwarf gorse and broom, mauve of the thrift and blues of the scillas and milkwert, with spotted orchids coming into flower. The birds were fine too, with ravens and rock doves, shags and fulmars. Buzzards were mewing as they circled over the sea and among a number of jackdaws we found a pair of even noisier choughs. Cornish chough is now a sad misnomer. On the Cornish cliffs I have seen plenty of Buzzards, but so far no choughs, now in Pembrokeshire I have seen both, and across the Irish Sea in Co. Kerry only choughs.

After Pembrokeshire we spent two days pony trekking at Llanwrtyd Wells. The Cambrian Mountains, open and grassy, make splendid riding country and the trekking is the greatest fun. The organisation here is a great co-operative achievement by the townfolk and the surrounding farmers, all of whom have opened their farms and hills to the trekkers for miles around. Many riders are put up in the town or on the farms and last year 600 people came. The advantages for Llanwyrtd Wells are obvious, but it is worth remembering that with so many people taking an interest in trekking and horses, often for the first time in their lives, it must be a safeguard for the future of field sports. The farmers take it in turns to act as guides to the experienced riders and the local huntsman comes out about twice a week, while instructors get to work on the beginners and have them out on the hills thoroughly enjoying themselves in a few days.

On our rides we explored some of the valleys west of Llanwyrtd, with their rushing trout streams, noisy with common sandpipers, grey wagtails and dippers, and the surrounding oakwoods, in which pied flycatchers, redstarts and wood warblers were singing. Once on the mountain tops, we found they were so smooth and grassy that we had some fine gallops. The hospitality of the farms where we lunched was one of the real delights of this pony trekking and made us realise yet again the truth of that roadside sign "Croeso i Gymru."

Press Relations

by Gunstock

WILDFOWLERS the world over must have suffered that awful embarrassment when an acquaintance, who has probably sat many patient hours listening to tales of the saltings, is eventually taken on to the marsh to be shown, not duck in their promised hundreds, but the odd bird, inevitably out of range and an empty bag at the end of it all—no matter how right the conditions.

It happened to me—again—in our first hard weather of 1958, but this time with a slight twist to the tale. The outing was the result of an urgent phone call from a national newspaper, of great repute, in the milder days before Christmas. An eager voice at the other end of the line pointed out that his editor wanted an article on wildfowling, and he wanted it quickly.

"How about this week-end?" he asked. He seemed hurt, nay distressed, to learn that "this week-end" would be no good—the tides were wrong. "Next week-end?" he asked; this time a little less hopefully.

Next week-end would have been possible, but a moon would have upset morning flight, and there were few duck here, anyway. "Leave it to me, and I'll give you a ring when the time is ripe," I suggested.

A disillusioned city journalist had to agree. How he explained to his editor why three thousand words on wildfowling would not be on his desk by noon the next day because "the tides were wrong" I would not guess.

Came Christmas and the Geese

Christmas came and with it the geese and the duck in greater quantities. New Year brought the hard weather and all was set. I briefed a now enthusiastic voice about what he would need, and promised to supply two pairs of size nine waders (borrowed) for himself and his photographer.

They arrived, a young pair, on a January night of fog and snow. A 60-mile drive had taken longer than expected, but we talked, over mugs of ale and roaring fire, about wildfowling, why men do it, and what they pursue. Midnight passed. I asked the reporter if he would like to take a gun himself, but he was a forthright chap. "Must be honest," he said. "Went to Scotland at Christmas, shot just about 100 cartridges without hitting fur or feather!"

Precisely on that pre-arranged hour my embarrassment began. The alarm failed and sleep was rudely stirred by a hammering on the door. Apologies were profuse and I paid for my slothfulness by going without breakfast. My two "guests" seemed well clad, although both were without head gear, and insisted they never wore any, even when offered it. All the same, I quietly pushed an old cap and an older tea-cosy into the gamebag.

Outside, snow fell lightly. The roads were treacherous, but our happy protographer clocked a steady 50 all the way to the marsh and dismissed a bit of highly alarming tail-skidding with the comment, "Better than laxative." We collected my shooting partner on the way, and he came more as a gesture than anything else, for he was working that day, and a thickly clouded sky meant a late dawn and a short stay for him.

A just reward for a long trip.

The marsh had been left a frozen expanse of white by a week of extremely hard weather. That morning was no less cold and there was no dawn flight to set the blood tingling. Yet I was confident duck would be found as the morning wore on.

Fortunately, partner Dick shot a whimbrel, and our photographer was able to show at least some reward for our efforts on his dawn exposures. Dick left us just as the snow began to fall its heaviest. Visibility was down to 100 yards. Now was the time to produce cap and tea-cosy. Both were gratefully donned and no Gentleman of the Press ever looked more elegant in hand-knitted head-wear.

It was obvious that no bird would fly in such conditions, although earlier we had heard the odd small bunch of pinkfeet. We tramped the marsh in search, stumbled over ice floes, and floundered in frozen snow-hidden flashes. An occasional teal, a small bunch of wigeon, and once a pintail turned up, and a couple of long shots produced nothing.

We had been on the marsh for nigh on three hours, and a big tide was beginning to make. I hoped the birds would be driven into the marsh and that patience would bring her reward. The snow had eased off, and a slight mist hung in the air. It was bitterly cold. Those two saw wildfowling at its roughest.

But the trip was near an end—for them, that is. One suggested he would have to rescue his baggage from the hotel, or the editor would think a bill for two days on the expense chit a bit steep, even for three thousand words on wildfowling—plus pictures. The other needed no encouragement to agree, and neither would accept my suggestion that one remain while the other did the baggage-collecting.

I was desperate. Was not my bag empty? They had not seen the promised duck killed. Assurances that the birds were bound to come were of no avail. Yet they did at least acquiesce to return as soon as they had removed their belongings.

The Inevitable Happened

Off they tramped, and the inevitable happened. The cackle of geese sounded nearby. Through the mists came seven pinkfeet, a yard above the snow. My heart sang. Here was a wildfowler's dream. I made sure I would not spoil the chance, stuck head into bank, and waited. But no geese came. A cautious peep showed them 100 yards away, beyond a fast-flowing run. I slithered down the bank, and raced up the run looking for a crossing place. But I was a foot of water too late. A serious contemplation of wading waist-deep was quickly abandoned when an ice-floe raced past.

From under the bank again I watched the geese searching the snow for food, occasionally calling and all the time walking closer to where I crouched. The gun was propped against the bank and I was intent on watching when a single pink sailed past not ten yards away. He seemed to look straight at me, for every detail was visible. I snatched at the gun, which was only loaded with 2½in. No. 5's, but he dropped thirty yards away with the first barrel, into the run, and a second shot finished him off as he was about to reach the far bank.

Minutes later a bunch of wigeon raced by. I killed a cock with the first barrel, and missed miserably with the second.

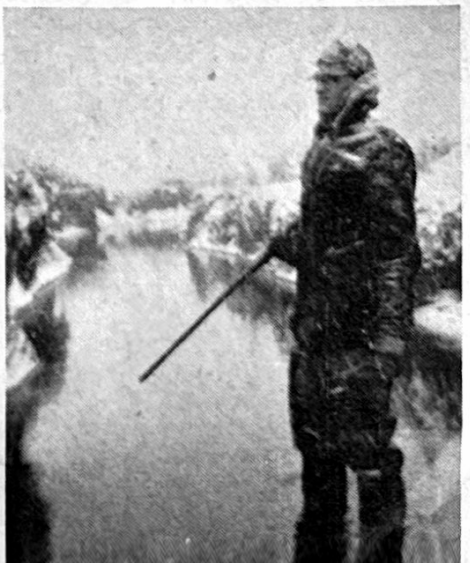
Another flock followed, but this time they sheered suddenly off. I looked round, and saw a washed, changed and revived reporter and photographer coming towards me. When they saw the two birds, the first wildfowl they had ever handled, I felt sure they thought I had made a crafty trip to the game shop.

Urged by the sight of something tangible, and another promise of more, they waited, and waited. But still they saw nothing shot, for the birds just did not come. I didn't bother to apologise. We just walked off as the tide flooded the bank and I hoped they would understand.

Anyway, they set off with a goose in the boot and I presume they got back safely in spite of a broken leaf-spring, for yesterday a letter of thanks arrived with a last paragraph:

"The goose was excellent. I started to clean it, but my stomach took charge of my head and the poulterer finished it off."

A frozen correspondent, plus a tea-cosy.



The following morning I passed the hoop and canvas caravan again.

Round the Game Preserves

by David Imrie

CYCLING home the other night at 11 o'clock along the quiet lonning, I was astonished to see the silhouette of a hoop and canvas caravan above the hedge. This indicated a gypsy encampment, and full proof was forthcoming when I got past the vehicle. Six swarthy nomads comprising a man, a woman, and four children, were squatting round a wood fire, which lit up their faces in an eerie fashion. A couple of lurcher pups were also gambolling around. As I passed, the man shouted: "Good evening, sir." And I returned the greeting without dismounting; for the gypsies were not on private property. They had simply drawn the caravan into a recess normally used by council workmen for heaping unwanted grit; so they were just clear of the roadway. The horse was not then visible, but a minute later I saw it tethered to the fence on a waste bit of land beside the beck bridge.

The following morning I passed the hoop and canvas caravan again, but all was still. The nomads were apparently in bed. Two unscrubbed pots were lying as they had been thrown down after supper, and several other items of junk were scattered round the grey ashes of the dead fire. I stopped for a moment, and somewhere inside the lurchers growled menacingly, which made me expect to see a face at the little window high in the back gable; but nothing stirred. I was really wondering what had become of the pony, when I suddenly spotted it 30 yards off in a pasture field, and quite 150 yards from the place where it had been tethered the previous evening. Obviously the gypsy (true to type) had shifted the animal before he retired for the night.

Full Board and Lodging

That same day just after 5 p.m. I spoke to the farmer who had unknowingly provided the gypsy's horse with board and lodgings. He had seen the equine trespasser, but had assumed that his man had sanctioned the entry. Therefore, he said nothing to the nomad. During our conversation, however, he revealed that his neighbour in an agony of apprehension for the well-being of his mowing grass just over the hedge from the caravan had telephoned the police, and that a constable had arrived between eight and nine a.m. to issue a warning, to which the gypsy listened respectfully, then immediately hastened to turn the horse out on the road, so that it might graze the sides until he and his family had partaken of breakfast. This was, of course, another offence, but the constable had gone before it was committed.

Where the Clans Meet

It is unlikely that we shall see that outfit here again for many a day. These gypsies were almost certainly making a detour to kill time before joining the great gathering of their kind this last week at Appleby in Westmorland, where an ancient fair, mainly devoted to horse-dealing, is held. This fair is said to have been chartered by James II in 1685, and despite the gradual decline in horse breeding, it continues to be more popular than ever.

This year there were caravans for at least three miles along the sides of the road between Appleby and Brampton, and the trade in horses was as good as it has ever been. One 82-year-old dealer from Darlington disposed of nearly 40 horses. The best price received by him was £86 for a pony. This man has attended Appleby fair 76 times. As a boy he galloped horses for his father, and now his son, who is little more than a schoolboy yet, carries on the old tradition. He put the horses through their paces last Wednesday for the benefit of prospective buyers.

But the best prices were got by Mr. Robert Liddle of Carlisle who had two trotters which made £115 and £125. Another dealer from Kirkby Stephen had a piebald pony which made £66, and an Irish dealer was successful in selling all of his 10 horses. They made prices which ranged from £35 to £43. The fine weather undoubtedly helped to make the fair a tremendous success. Thousands of people who had no intention of buying horses poured into Appleby to see the colourful display; for some of the caravans nowadays are luxurious homes, equipped with modern devices, which include, in some cases, expensive wireless sets. Nevertheless the romantic atmosphere of this Bohemian gathering remains.

The fair could not pass without an accident, of course. One of the galloping steeds rounded a bend, and hit an oncoming car, fortunately without doing itself much harm. The driver had the presence of mind to throw himself into the bottom of the cart, and escaped also; but the incident could easily have had a different ending. It reminded me of a remark made before the fair by a local man, who had been chartered to take a bus load of people over to Appleby on the preceding Sunday, which is regarded as a "visiting" day. He said that attempts had been made to stop this annual collection of gypsies, hawkers, tinker, and others, because the galloping horses bought and sold by them were a menace to traffic of a more orthodox kind. However, I hope that they do not succeed. This is a relic of byegone England, and it ought to be encouraged until it dies a natural death, which must come inevitably when gypsies are no longer interested in nor need horses. And I say so, even if those nomads have seldom been much of a material asset to any country.

The Name Gypsy

Incidentally, the name gypsy is a corruption of Egyptian, and was first used (partly as a term of contempt) because fortune-tellers were once assumed to have originated in the neighbourhood of the Nile. But gypsies (or *zingari, gitanos, bohemiens, zigeuner,* etc., according to the country in which they reside) are generally acknowledged to have spread out from India. They call themselves Rom; and in all the five or six centuries of their known nomadic existence they have managed to keep themselves very much to themselves. In this country at least, and probably in most other European countries, they never debase themselves by doing manual work in conjunction with the native population. They prefer to trade from door to door, and are able to pick up a living in an artful fashion, which occasionally includes a bit of poaching.

In my youth some of the northern gypsies used to make and sell "reenges," which were then the best scourers for the porridge pot. They were simply trimmed bunches of heather bound with wire, but they did their job just as well as the present day gadgets of nylon, steel or copper. And they had the advantage (from the Romany point of view!) of wearing out fairly quickly so the trade was always brisk. But the bottom has probably dropped out of this market long ago. Housewives prefer now to be up to date, and a heather reenage, we must admit, does not blend well with the fashionable items in a modern kitchen.

However, the gypsies are a resourceful race. They will always find something to exploit commercially. Their latest racket, which I heard of only a few months ago, consist of invading conifer woods in search of seed cones. Last winter their depredations became so much of a nuisance on the estate of Altyre, near Forres, Morayshire, that firm action had to be taken by the management. Warning notices were erected with this inscription: "Anyone found trespassing for the gathering of cones on and after January 4 will be prosecuted."

Apparently the robbers were not content with collecting fallen cones only. They arrived with ladders, and sought their booty in the tree-tops, with the inevitable result that pines and larches were damaged severely. So, to back up the printed notices, a platoon of foresters and gamekeepers had to patrol the estate regularly. One can understand that vigorous measures are necessary to stop this sort of pillaging; for good pine and larch cones are reputed to fetch anything up to £1 per bushel in the nurseryman's black market. And an active person is able to gather at least three bushels in a day where conditions are favourable. Legitimate pickers can get up to 12s. per bushel. This activity is, of course, only "in season" between November and March.

Sodden crops and drowned birds are many a shooting farmer's lot.

The Young Shot

Bleak Prospects

by Petrel

THE voice on the telephone was steeped in gloom. "This," it bemoaned, "is, I'm afraid, disaster year for game with a capital D. From my observations, at any rate." It was his call, so I asked him to elaborate, and his sorry news, without mentioning any names, save to say that it refers to estates and smaller shoots in Berkshire and Hampshire, is reported herewith. And let me add that my informant is a fellow who gets about and knows what to look for in his capacity of pigeon shot and adviser on matters sporting.

On one of the best partridge shoots in the country during the first week of July he saw but one small covey of birds, and those obviously just out of the egg. On another shoot where twenty-two broods had been seen since the third week of June, twenty-two pairs of old birds were observed a fortnight later and not a single chick. On an estate hard by Newbury, fifteen hundred of the 4,500 pheasants reared have fallen victims to gapes.

That is the gist of his tragic tale. What of other parts of the country? No news is good news so they say. My personal tally of news is scanty, but in its light I doubt whether many of the areas from which I have not heard, have much to offer in the way of glad tidings.

A fowling colleague from County Durham has little to say about pheasants and partridges. He is much too concerned about the grouse. What damage the weather has not achieved has been done by disease. Severe losses on this account, he says, and such a pity when such a good stock was left at the end of last season. The immediate question that springs to mind is whether too strong a stock was left, for nothing breeds disease like too many birds for the ground. Another telephone call five minutes ago; the Market Harborough district washed out by floods. Partridge prospects all washed up.

Just the Wrong Time

From Kent, a similar story of torrential rain at the crucial time of hatching. In this county last year bags were probably the best since the war, and the promise for this season was great. Losses are now estimated at 50 per cent, which will put back hopes and stocks not only for this season but for several years to come. From an East Kent pests officer comes bad news all round, and pests officers get around.

What makes things so much worse is the knowledge thatt if the countrywide rain had fallen a fortnight or so earlier or later, instead of straddling the partridge hatch like a barrage, many a nest and brood would have survived. Has no one any good news for a change, apart from a friend who shoots on the downs above Marlborough and who tells me that things are not too bad at all, for the storms drenched the land on one side of the hill while his best partridge ground lies on the other side. In fact, the usual worry there is drought conditions, which bring lack of water, bare ground exposed to vermin, and sparse growth and seeding. In my own neck of the woods, although they in no way make up for the loss of game, two disasters which may be turned to some slight advantage are apparent. Several barley fields look as though a herd of elephants has rampaged through them, as a result of the torrential rain. Given a fine spell, they may recover to some extent, but it should not be hard to find a patch of laid barley when the ear ripens and the pigeon flock to the feast. Very likely too, there will remain some unharvested patches for the benefit of duck and duck shooters.

Back to Barley

The crop rotation along our valley has come round largely to barley again this year, for which we duck and pigeon shooters are duly grateful, as also for a good showing of wheat, which will suit us almost equally well. As far as pigeon are concerned, the latter corn crop is generally the best draw of the three. Listening to some pigeon punishers last weekend planning for the future and licking their lips at the sight of two large oat fields, I mentally and happily welcomed their choice. Let them go there, gladly. If there is a choice, give me the wheatfield every time. Incidentally, a professional pigeon shooter mentions that he shot his first bird with corn in its crop this year on July 3.

Up till now, the pigeon's chief recent diet has been kale and the charlock which grows in such successful competition with the crop on so many kale fields. In this connection we had another example of the awkwardness of some farmers to pigeon shooters the other day. Noticing a couple of kale fields proverbially blue with birds, we sought immediate permission to take action. This proved impossible. The boss was away; his foreman could give no leave. When the farmer returned, he was given our message, and thereafter it took another week of deliberation on his part and badgering on ours before his gracious permission was granted. By that time, of course, it was too late. The pigeon had stripped his fields and departed. We felt bound to show the flag and wasted an afternoon. Give him his due, however, that farmer has now realised the error of his ways and we shall be on his land again, at the right time. But what an expensive lesson.

The increasing interest being taken in the rearing of wildfowl is both gratifying and to some extent surprising. I am thinking now not so much of mallard, but the rarer and more colourful duck. Judging by the number and length of the price lists which I have studied, the rearing of ornamental fowl has become quite a large scale business and, it would appear, a profitable one. I would say, too, that the number of duck "farms" is bound to snowball, for once the amateur has reared a brood from his original pair or two, if he wants to increase the variety of his collection he must sell the young birds to help pay for the new intake. And so it goes on. A glance at the price lists of ornamental duck breeders will leave no doubt about the necessity of this procedure if variety of species is the object.

A young shot of my acquaintance has just laid the foundations of a small collection of fowl, and his industry is a good example of what can be achieved on limited ground. Having persuaded his parents to part with a corner of the garden some ten yards square, he spent his school holiday erecting a fox proof fence around the area and digging out a two foot deep pond in its centre. This was then concreted, and as there is no stream handy, the pool has to be siphon-emptied from time to time and refilled via the garden hose. Broom and iris have been planted to give cover, and two thatched nesting boxes raised about three feet off the ground were installed for his first pair of Carolinas. These in their first summer as adults took full advantage; ten eggs were laid and hatched beneath a Silkie-cross bantam. Seven ducklings survived, and in anticipation of a later sale, their owner bought a pair of red-crested pochard.

Last week I was called in to pinion the Carolina ducklings, then a month old. Pinioning duck is the only certain method of keeping them at home. Feather-cutting is effective, but is only a temporary measure that must be repeated after every moult which involves the sometimes awkward business of catching up the birds. But pinioning can be ineffective if improperly carried out and duck whose wings have only been severed at the tip, have been known to fly away. The wing should be cut at the joint where the bastard wing protrudes, i.e. at the first obvious joint from the tip. Birds should be pinioned at about a week old; some experts do the job at four days. The longer it is left, the more serious the operation and the greater danger of hurt or excessive bleeding. Use a knife, or better, a pair of scissors, not razor sharp, for a slight crushing effect helps to arrest the bleeding.

Dab a little Acriflavex on the wound. Be not squeamish about the task. Go about it with speed and resolution and fear nothing. In that time-honoured phrase, it will hurt you far more than it does the duckling.

A Countryman's Jottings

by Glancer

ONE hears a lot of talk in fishy circles about the cunning trout, his wariness and cleverness, his skill at evading capture, his gut-shyness, fly-shyness, and the way he "learns" from awkward encounters with anglers—people would have you believe that he is endowed with a wonderful power of reasoning, and that the survival of the species is largely attributable to this factor, though in actual fact the size of a trout's brain in relation to his total weight is very small. One would have thought that a book that was written several years ago (by, I think, one McCaskie) called *The Guileless Trout* would have debunked the notion once and for all. The truth may be that fishermen prefer to maintain the belief, persuading themselves that the catching of a fish is more difficult than in fact it is!

A recent incident, which is probably not a very unusual one in its general form, supports the theory of guilelessness. It is only fair to remark that on the water where this took place the trout, though not as a rule free risers, are exceedingly persistent when they do take it into their heads to eat surface food.

At about noon a trout was rising in a very overgrown and woody pool. He was under some overhanging boughs and it was pure good fortune that a fly fell in the right place and he grabbed it willingly. Unfortunately, he dived straight into some roots, broke the cast, and went off with a pheasant tail in his mouth.

Nothing else was rising in the vicinity, the pool had been thoroughly disturbed, and it seemed a good chance to wade across and do some cutting-out. This was achieved without much trouble, but there was a good deal of disturbance and "kerflummery" in the process.

Less than ninety minutes later another fisher worked his way upstream into the same pool and saw a fish rising. He cast, hooked, and landed it, and was surprised to discover not only his own fly in its mouth, but a pheasant tail as well—he had been using a blue upright. When the fishermen met subsequently, it was soon established that this was the same fish. It had been rising in precisely the same place, despite the fact that the sheltering trees had been partly removed and the overhead scene, from the fish's viewpoint, must have been considerably altered. It weighed one pound, quite a good one for the river, and was certainly old enough to have learned wisdom if it was ever going to do so.

The End of It All

The fact that a gentleman in America is foretelling the end of the world in the fairly near future through the medium of a second flood need not disturb us too much—some might say that the elements have done their worst and failed, though it seems that the seas, and not the rains, are to provide the medium. The earth is going to acquire a nasty tilt and the oceans will flow in and that will be that.

There are always a few people going round and predicting the most frightful catastrophes, and they get an exceptionally attentive hearing in the U.S.A., perhaps because that continent's inhabitants have not learned that generally speaking it is a great deal more difficult to stop something than it is to start it, and that the general tendency is for things to go on rather than to stop.

At least twice in the last forty years there have been confident prognostications about the ending of the world. In one case the actual time and date were given, and believers sold their houses, made peace all round, and refused invitations which, obviously, they would be unable to keep, thus preparing for the worst . . . or the best, as many of them regarded it.

It must be rather disconcerting to go to bed in the sober belief that there will be no tomorrow, only to wake up and find that everything is proceeding much as usual. It is also slightly embarrassing to have to meet someone who has said quite certainly that the world was going to end yesterday, and has bidden you farewell for the last time. One does not know whether to adopt a leg-pulling attitude, or to commiserate.

Actions in Emergencies

In a recent article about foxes, "Tower-Bird" remarked that at times they do the most silly things. This set me thinking about the behaviour of hunted foxes, and thus to hares, otters and rats.

When one considers the tremendous and unaccustomed pressures that are brought to bear on a hunted animal in the shape of noise, confusion, unexpectedness and all the rest, especially in the early stages, it is rather remarkable, surely, that the quarry so seldom makes a fatal mistake.

Just occasionally a fox does take the wrong turning. An incident of this sort happened last season when an outlier was "caught on the hop" and ran straight along the fence in which he had been lying into a bit of covert, only to turn sharply down a flight of steps into the ruins of what had probably been an ice-house. As he was still in view at the time, he sealed his fate, for hounds tumbled downstairs on top of him. But this was exceptional and it is seldom indeed that a huntsman can add one to the tally so easily—no doubt some of the poor chaps who struggle through the season for a low figure wish with all their hearts that some such fluke could come their way occasionally!

Hares sometimes get themselves into needlessly tight corners, but this happens at the end of the hunt rather than at the beginning; and they are only too likely to disappear altogether at this juncture, or to make a getaway without too much difficulty. Otters seem to differ from foxes and hares in that they have much more self-confidence; so much so that they will even attack a hound when there is no need to do so. But the whole process of otter-hunting is so different from other forms of hunting that comparisons are not helpful.

As for the rat . . . well, does a rat *ever* take the wrong turning? Get him into a corner where there is only one possible escape route, and he will choose that route infallibly in preference to half-a-dozen alternatives. He never goes wrong. Perhaps that is why rat-hunting with dogs is such a capital sport; the quarry is a very worthy one, and every time you catch him you have had to work hard. The only rat that ever makes a serious error of judgment is the very ill or the very old rat.

Why do people use the expression "cowardly as a rat"? There is nothing the least bit cowardly about him. He may have all sorts of undesirable characteristics, but cowardliness is not amongst them. He is cunning but not cowardly. One must be fair to him!

Many years ago we had the ratting rights, so to speak, over a farm that was infested with the creatures. This was long before anyone had thought of rodent operators, or operatives, or whatever they are called. For part of the time, and part of the time only, we kept a tally of the rats killed, and the figure was in the region of 2,000 before the place was cleared. We often remarked that throughout that long campaign there seemed to have been scarcely an instance when a rat had "given himself up," and it is no doubt this wonderful instinct of self-preservation which makes him the menace that he is.

Fires and Fire Prevention

The Forestry Commission produced a rather striking slogan the other day when they were entreating people to be a little more careful how they lit fires and picnicked in the country; it went somewhat as follows: "One tree can produce a million matches; one match can burn a million trees."

After some idle thoughts on the matter and the way it was put, a mathematical sum indicated that the tree in question would have furnished 22,222 individual matchboxfuls (they tell you the average contents on the outside of the boxes), and the tree may therefore have armed that number of individual fire-raisers.

In point of fact, heath fires in this part of the world have been less numerous than last year. It would be nice to think that this is the result of greater care by the public, but in fact it is more likely to be due to conditions that discouraged conflagration.

I have only seen the beginning of one of these heath-cum-woodland fires, but the rate of spread was very alarming. I hope I never see one again. It was easy to understand that huge stands of timber could become engulfed before anyone had time enough to do anything about it. Incidentally, though this did not affect the issue on the occasion in question, the fire-beaters, or broomlike things provided by the Commission at strategic points, do not seem substantial or numerous enough, but maybe they know best what the public can handle efficiently.

Names, Faces and Classes

We have been in the mid-season of village flower shows, nothing very ambitious, even though they do give rise to occasional heart-burnings. Few things are more certain to destroy local popularity than for one of the so-called gentry to enter in the "cottagers' classes"; it matters not that the "gent" may have the smallest garden in the village and never by any chance employ any outside help, let alone a regular gardener. Newcomers to the community are apt to get into serious trouble over this point, quite unwittingly, and have taken years to live it down.

The summer show is the rose show, and it was remarkable if for no other reason than that it demonstrated how tremendously keenly the art of flower arrangement is taken. The pity is that the clever-clever brigade have got hold of it, so that strings of pearls, kid gloves, table ornaments and what-have-you are included in so-called flower arrangements.

An amusing class concerned the very young. They had to collect and display as many different grasses as they could find. The winning child seemed to have about fifty, beautifully displayed . . . and if she had thought fit to come and explore our so-called lawn she might have had about a dozen more!

The roses were superb. The bane of my life is that I cannot remember their names. It is the same with people. I can meet them for years and know their histories and idiosyncrasies, yet their names are mystery; the times goes past when one can decently enquire, and so the state of ignorance becomes permanent. When it was part of my duty to recognise the individuals of a pack of hounds the same trouble arose; I think I should have known quickly enough if a strange hound had joined the pack for a day's outing, but it was a constant effort to identify old friends by name . . . and a very great nuisance this stupidity can be, in the hunting field as well as elsewhere. It is not altogether laziness or casualness; it is an aberration which is ineradicable and probably congenital.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters and photographs are invited for this page. They should be as brief as possible, and the names and addresses of senders must be given, though these need not necessarily be published. Correspondence should be addressed to The Editor, The Shooting Times & Country Magazine, 29 Old Bond Street, London, W.1. 'Phone: HYDe Park 2556/2557.

THE SEAT OF JUSTICE

Sir,—The "Johnson" seat described by "Tower-Bird" in his article (issue July 4) sounds an excellent piece of equipment. However, could he not give us a description or drawing of its construction instead of simply praising its properties. The latter course can only give rise to wistful thoughts by your readers on future occasions when suffering from cramped, damped or frozen posteriors caused by squatting in frosty kale fields, and after missing shots due (we like to think) to lack of such a useful support.

I am sure our members, and other pigeon shooters as well as wildfowlers would be interested in a description.

P. DAVID LISHMAN,
Hon. Sec., The Midlands Woodpigeon Club, Knowle, Solihull, Warwickshire.

[You will by now have read all about the stool in the issue for June 11.—Ed.]

PESTS OFFICERS: FOX DESTRUCTION

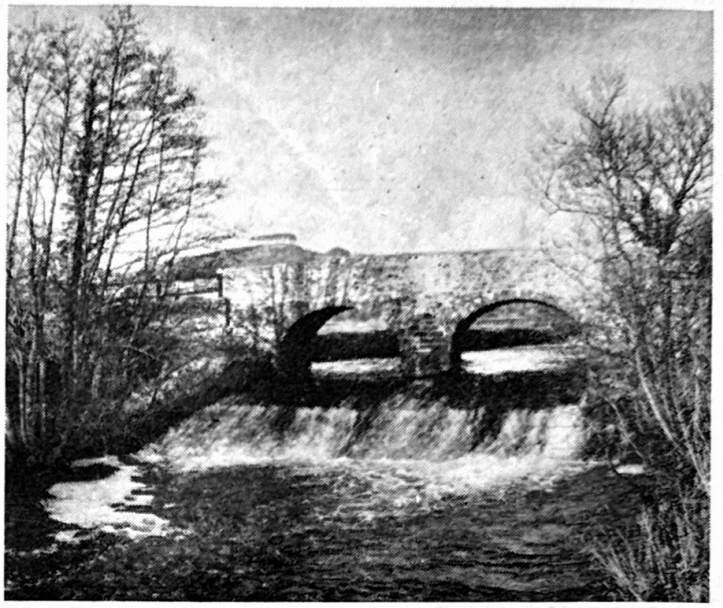
Sir, — Over the past few months there has been quite a lot of criticism by correspondents of their respective Pests Officers. Happily there is no lack of co-operation in Breconshire. We have here a man who is 100 per cent co-operative, any query receives a prompt and courteous reply, and shooting men are always welcomed at his office to discuss pests problems. This sensible attitude is most satisfying to all who sally forth after pigeon, etc., in this county.

Fox destruction also comes under his jurisdiction throughout Breconshire, and indeed other counties in Wales. Fox clubs meet regularly, for in spite of the excellents hunts, foxes are only controlled by shooting in Wales. Large tracts of hillside are now Forestry Commission Forests, which are natural homes for all types of vermin, and foxes fall into this category where sheep farming predominates. Without these fox clubs, lamb losses would be tremendous. In Breconshire over the last 10 years, foxes destroyed by the clubs run into four figures *each year*.

Clubs usually meet on Sunday mornings, and in our club the turnout averages about 20 guns, and a like number of beaters. Several miles of hillside are combed on one drive, three or four guns walking with the beaters, and the rest placed strategically on the hill. I never cease to be thrilled by the cry of the beaters, whilst stationed a couple of miles in front of them. One hears very faintly at first, gradually increasing in volume, a cry which cannot be far removed from the Red Indian war whoop.

Generally the foxes do not offer hard shots. Usually you can see them loping along well in front of the beaters, stopping now and again to listen to the advance, and eventually a well placed charge of BB gives a quick and humane end. Sometimes the local hunt is asked to cooperate in a particularly dense conifer forest, and then the hounds are put into the forest with the guns stationed on rides, and on the outside. It speaks well of the guns that no hound has ever been peppered.

BROCK,
Brecon, S. Wales.



Langford Bridge across the River Otter, one mile east of Honiton. (See letter, "The Otter—and Robin Hood.")

THE OTTER—AND ROBIN HOOD!

Sir,—The River Otter has one of the extremely few names to be derived from that animal, in England, and it in its turn makes such names as Otterhead, Upottery, Ottery St. Mary, Otterton, and one or two others. The photograph shows the river coming under Langford Bridge which carries a by-road up into the Blackdown Hills (a tree-topped spur of which is visible) where the river rises. These Blackdown Hills are of some topical interest as likely to be made, in the near future, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty by designation of the National Parks Commission. The shooting is on the whole poor, but the area is of interest to naturalists: curlew nest here, up on the Devon and Somerset border, and there are many roe in the Taunton-Wellington area. A curiosity beside one of the hill-top roads is Robin Hood's Butts, marked on the one-inch map and suggesting that Robin Hood used to jaunt down here from Sherwood for a spot of archery practice! The name seems, however, to be 19th century and based on the activities of a broom-squire or besom-maker called Robin Hood, either rightly or by nickname. The butts are barrows or burial tumuli, some of them half-disguised by an overplanting of trees.

WESTCOUNTRYMAN,
Somerset.

WILDFOWLING IN GERMANY

Sir,—In your issue for May 16 there was an article "Wildfowling in Germany." I am doing a two-year practical engineering course over here, and am within easy motoring distance of Carolinensiel—the village mentioned in the article. The author concerned wrote under the pen-name "Desert Rat." I wonder if he would get in touch with me.

Could one of your readers tell me, or put me in touch with anyone who knows of any places, either in Northwest Germany, or in Holland where there are possibilities of any wildfowling. I quite realise that it might be difficult in Germany, because most of the shooting rights belong to the State.

I may add, that I am now twenty, and have been shooting for ten years, and am considered to be a perfectly safe shot.

JOHN CLUGSTON,
Villenstrasse 3, Rheinhausen,
West Deutschland.

LETTING THE CROPS

Sir,—Recently I saw this letter in a daily newspaper (I enclose cutting). Surely the farmer (not to mention the syndicate), has some say in the matter! Besides, no farmer will let every Tom, Dick and Harry tour his land with a gun.

ONE OLD CROW,
Glos.

[Thank you for the cutting printed below.—Ed.]

CROPS "TO LET"

Measures should be taken against farmers who refuse to let volunteers shoot wood pigeons on their land. A local farmer would not let me shoot them because the shooting was let to a syndicate. His crops were also let—to every pigeon in the district.—G. Eccles, Weston-on-the-Green, Oxfordshire.

REPEATERS FOR DEFENCE: SAFETY CATCHES

Sir, — Regarding Mr. Richard Arnold's most excellent remarks on the above subject in the June 20 issue, I would add a couple of points from experience with shot guns in the tropics.

On shot sizes, like him, I would prefer numbered to letter shot every time and 6s are blindingly effective at short ranges. In a roadside ambush towards the end of the Burma cam-

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paign, I "stopped" two barrels from a 3in. 12-bore and had it been 6s I wouldn't be able to write this letter. The first shot, a solid round bull, missed me, went into my small pack, mangled a mess tin and much misshapen, wrapped itself in socks and towel but the inertia nearly pulled me out of the jeep. Thank goodness it missed. The second barrel, 1¼ozs. of SG was partially diverted by the side of the jeep and I got three pellets, in leg, buttocks and shoulder. None of these stopped me and I led the rush to overrun the ambush, capture the shotgun and some cartridges and account for the attackers. At 25 yards, with 6s I'm sure, as Mr. Arnold says, I would have been writhing on the ground or have crashed the jeep.

Unlike Mr. Arnold I would not be too happy with an automatic shotgun in that climate in a tight corner. I found, that in the rainy season at least, it was impossible to stop paper cases swelling a little and there is a risk of a slightly oversize case jamming the gun. For that reason I would prefer a bolt action repeater or a pump gun where extra force can be used to close it, if necessary.

Perhaps all metal cases are now available, when the point would not matter. For all that, I would always carry a .38 revolver, which will still fire even if you have just swum the river. As he says "War is war," and second chances are not to be expected.

On the subject of safety catches I hesitate to stand between "Gun Gossip" and Mr. Piveteau. As "G.G." has an auto safety perhaps I am safer nearer him. It occurs to me that at least one of our leading makers has for many years fitted an independent side safety as standard and doubtless has good reason for doing so: about three years ago, in their London shop, I was referred to the "Master" and his book on shotguns for the reasons.

In my own opinion (and I use both types) the "free" safety is ideal for the conditions Mr. Muspratt expects in tight corners abroad and in competition shooting, where every action is deliberate and the user a careful shot. For ordinary shooting I am sure the auto safety has stopped many an accident, even though most of its users incorrectly assume the gun is completely safe.

If an auto safety causes hard swearing the remedy is a few hours' practice in using it properly—pushed off at the completion of gun mounting. If you can't control your own safety you should not be allowed to endanger the safety of others.

M. W. Stock,
Bishopsteignton, Devon.

Sir,—The question of the necessity of safety catches, however unreliable, having been never discussed or contested, I am afraid Mr. Mander is off the mark.

The whole question was, which is better? The automatic safety catch or the plain optional safety catch under control of the shooter?

May I ask readers not to be horrified if they see illustrated in advertisements guns without the safety slide on the tang. I can assure them that they are all fitted with the catch, but instead of having the safety slide placed on the tang it is so placed that the shooter, on aiming, cannot fail to notice that it is on if left inadvertently so. Without him displacing his sight from the quarry, his trigger finger will easily draw the catch back.

J. G. L. Piveteau,
London, S.W.17.

Sir,—Although I do not agree with Mr. Piveteau's views on automatic safety catches, I think it is a bit unjust to reckon him an unsafe shot because of them.

Unless I have for years had hold of entirely the wrong end of the stick the aim of safe gunhandling is to avoid injury to life and limb in the event of an accidental discharge, which may happen despite a safety catch.

Admittedly manipulation of the safety catch is a part of gun handling and without doubt if it is kept applied up till the last moment before firing the risk of a premature discharge due to pressure on the trigger is diminished. However if I had to list the points of safe gunhandling in order of merit, I am afraid "safety catch drill" would come well down the list. There are far more important ones such as not pointing your gun at anyone, not shooting where you haven't a clear view, unloading before crossing an obstacle and so on.

As a matter of fact some guns don't have safety catches! For a long time I shot with such a one, a hammer gun by a leading London maker. It takes a moment or two to cock the hammers of such a gun. A lot of my shooting was then and still is at snipe in Ireland. If I wanted any shooting the only way to get it was to walk the bogs with the gun cocked. I have shot like this in company many a time, and as far as I know have not gained the reputation thereby of being an unsafe shot. In case anyone may think "mad Irish; they do all sorts of peculiar things," I hasten to add that some of my companions are most reputable shots who also grace many an English covertside during the season. I cannot agree that the simple act of walking over rough country with a cocked gun with the safety catch off is an instance of unsafe gun handling provided the walker uses his commonsense and keeps his pace consistent with the state of the ground.

R.F.W.
Drogheda, Eire.

Fred Nixon of Contarf Gun Club, Dublin, winner of most of the Irish Clay Pigeon Championships during the past years was at the top of his form when winning The Royal Cup at The Kilternan Gun Club Shoot at Ticknock, Dublin, with 25 straight on June 15.

PICCADILLY GUN CLUB

Sir,—May I draw readers' attention to the change of address of the Piccadilly Gun Club, late of Tickhill, which has now transferred to Green Tree, Hatfield, Woodhouse.

Shoots are held on every second Sunday of the month and are open to all comers. Further information is obtainable from me at the address below.

A. Brown.
Secretary, Bawtry Road, Hatfield Woodhouse, Nr. Doncaster, Yorks.

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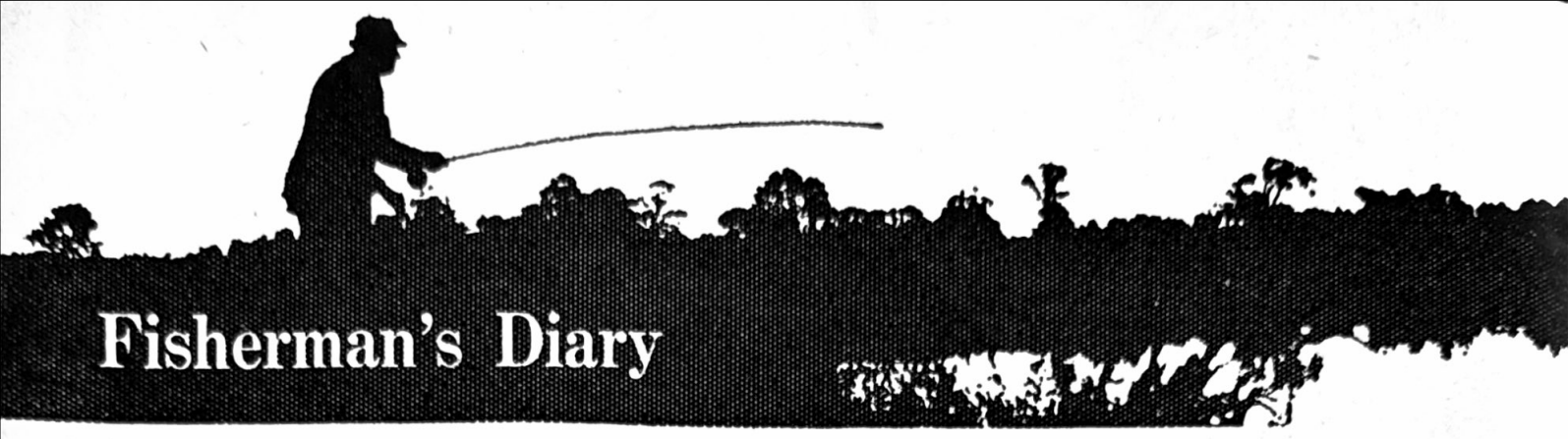

Fisherman's Diary

THE five latest additions to the National Nature Reserves have been mentioned elsewhere in this journal. Those in the Broads are of particular interest to fishermen. They comprise 1,204 acres of Heigham Sound and Hickling Broad and 734 acres covering the Bure Marshes Nature Reserve. The last named includes Ranworth Broad and Cockshoot Broad.

They are among the many areas of the Broads which are gradually becoming dry land, and it may be that experiments will lead to the discovery of some inexpensive method of halting a process which reduces useful water to useless land.

It is generally believed today that most of the Broads are due to peat cutting by early inhabitants of East Anglia, the pits having filled with water when cutting ceased, much as gravel and claypits do today. Throughout the centuries two fenland crops were in demand—reed for thatching and poles from pollarded alders. The demand for both started to decline at the turn of the century, and in the years since the war it has dwindled almost to nothing.

Another factor is silting. Decayed vegetable and animal matter, with dust from the air and other sources year after year adds a few more millimetres to the deposit of mud or silt on the bottom. Through the last ten centuries or so this has not been important, but as the depth of water decreases a danger level of about four feet is reached. Once that happens rooted reeds and plants can spread quickly, and the arrival of dense plant growth hastens the shallowing processes.

It is not long before water-loving trees such as alder and aspen encroach and build more solid foundations. After a few years of swamp conditions that which was once a broad becomes a dry and possibly sandy area of heathland.

At the moment it looks as though little can be done about it. Estimates for deepening some of the dangerously silted broads run, as usual, into impossibly high figures, and it is unlikely that bands of voluntary workers from the angling fraternity will be available while thousands of acres remain fishable.

Estimates!

Thinking of estimates for draining silt reminds me of other estimates. It seems impossible in these days to get a limited estimate. Perfection may be a good ideal, but a great many improvements and, more important, actions to stop some deterioration, could be carried out if the perfection limit were dropped. Parish, rural and urban councils find themselves faced with ridiculously high estimates because the contractors insist on a complete job. There never seems to be any attempt to send one man along with a bucket of cement to stop, say, the loose coping of a bridge getting any looser.

If a sensible man wants his house decorated internally by a professional firm he gets an estimate for what he wants — so many rooms, so much done. The decorator does not refuse to touch the job unless he can paint the attics and whitewash the cellars.

So it is with canal renovation. I stood on the bridge of a famous canal last week with the secretary of the local anglers' federation. A stretch of about a mile containing two locks was weak but not derelict. The locks needed repair, but not replacement, and the banks required some puddling. The estimate from the authority concerned was £10,000. The very roundness of the sum shows that no real thought had been given to the matter. For that money they could presumably replace the locks and re-puddle the whole stretch. Any lesser effort was not worth worrying about.

Gravel Pits

In a letter to *The Times* a writer complains of the inability of planning authorities to demand that any pits dug shall be filled in when operations cease. The inclusion of such a clause in planning authority permission was suggested in the report, now ten years old, of the Waters' Advisory Committee on Sand and Gravel, but it does not work out in practice. The clause is included but usually rendered completely useless by the qualification: "subject to the availability of suitable in-filling material at reasonable prices."

This, of course, is a complete let out.

None of those points are particularly new: what surprises me is the implication in the letter of a very great number of useless, derelict, unsightly and dangerous pits.

I thought that in these days angling clubs almost fought over the acquisition of disused pits, but apparently I am wrong—though it may be that the letter-writer considers a pit taken over by a group of anglers and stocked with fish still to be "useless, derelict, unsightly and dangerous."

Outboard Engines

Not so many years ago an outboard engine was regarded merely as an unreliable substitute for oars, that might or might not start when the string was pulled. I remember some long and weary pulls in Bantry Bay when, after a few hours' fishing at anchor, our outboard refused to start for the homeward journey—a journey much longer than we should have contemplated had we rowed out. Sometimes the "engineer" managed to bring it to life *en route*, but more often he failed.

I suppose there a good many engines of the same type in use today, but the post-war outboard is a very different affair from those early creations. I have just seen a representative array of British models which look as though they will start as readily as a motor car and give as little trouble when running. The whole conception of the outboard engine has changed. It is no longer merely a chancy aid to rowing but a recognised source of power for which many light craft are now specially designed.

Of those I saw the prices ranged from £488 for a heavy duty 70 h.p. engine, weighing more than 200lb., to a £25 model of 1.3 h.p., weighing only 18lb.

A few of the geared models have a special gear which brings speed down to a suitable one for trolling.

Birmingham in June

I was in Birmingham on July 1, and the evening paper gave an account of the June weather. I would not describe the June scene in my own neck of the woods as felicitous, but I do not think I was quite so badly dealt with as were the Midlands.

It was the second wettest June in Birmingham for 71 years, and June 2 was the wettest day since 1901. The total rainfall for the month was 4.23in., against an average of 2.04in.

I have always appreciated the quiet philosophy underlying William Browne's 300-year-old couplet:

There is no season such delight can bring
As summer, autumn, winter and the spring.

In my more pessimistic moods I now wonder if it does not contain more fact than philosophy.

Handicapping

I was in Birmingham on angling business and spoke to several people interested in the subject. Match fishing is of the greatest importance in the area, as can be imagined when it is realised that greater Birmingham now has more than one thousand one hundred angling clubs. I spelt that figure out in case there should be any doubt about it.

All those clubs fish their individual matches and vie with others in leagues and knock-outs. Match angling is by far the most important British sport that carries financial rewards if the criterion be the number of people taking part in it.

Yet, as was pointed out to me by one of the friends I met, it has no professionals and no handicapping system.

There are two or three recognised methods of handicapping, but very few clubs use them—in Birmingham certainly not more than a dozen out of 1,100. It is simply a case of "start at scratch and winner takes the lot."

Casting seems to be the only branch of angling that has fostered professionals.

Paper Backs

Some weeks ago I commented upon the vast number of paper backed books now available. I understand that a new series of reprints is to start and that one of the titles may be a classical angling work. I do not know what it will be—if indeed it has been decided—except that it will not be "The Compleat Angler." There are plenty to choose from, and the first book may be used as an indicator to popularity.

CORIDON.

Contortionists at work. Match rifles, Bisley.

A Technical Excursion

by Squeaker

IT is likely that I am one of the least technical-minded shooters in this country. I had a rather vague suspicion that this was so before the Scottish meeting and the rather caustic comments of several friends there made deeper my suspicions. The further remarks of friends who spent the weekend after Grantown with us confirmed my thoughts and made it crystal clear that in this technical and scientific age I am a dead loss. In view of this rather rude awakening I was glad to take the opportunity of finding out more of the technical details of shooting, or to be more exact, what happens when we press the trigger. My conscientious studies have led me to an inescapable conclusion and I wish I had not bothered. Frankly I am scared stiff.

All right—what does happen? As far as I can make out the train of events is as follows. *At a suitable moment,* we'll come back to that one later, the trigger is squeezed, pressed, jerked, or set in motion by whatever method the shooter thinks is the best way of firing his rifle. At this moment all sorts of things take place inside the mechanism of the rifle, the sum result of which is that the sear and bent are disengaged so releasing the strike spring which forces the firing pin forward with considerable force. When we consider what can go wrong in the minute fraction of a second in which this complicated train takes place we find enough to take the grin off the face of the most confirmed optimist. Wear of moving parts, chipped edges, badly fitting pins, poorly finished parts with rags and scars, fatigued springs are all I can think of at present. Lucky the shooter who has not at one time or another suffered from one or more of these nine producing defects. We are told that any of the above defects will be enough to produce targets more like tea cakes than the tiny half inch groups which the ammunition advertisers prize so highly.

Troubles Start

Just suppose that your action is in perfect order and you have released the trigger correctly, suppose I say because the chances are probably thousands to one against everything being just right. At this, as we have said, the striker flies forward to hit the rim of the round in the chamber of your rifle. (Let us leave the depressing subject of chamber-faults till a later date.) Now your troubles really start. The striker crushes the rim and so fires the priming charge cunningly placed there by the manufacturer. Pity the poor manufacturers who must spend sleepless nights working out methods of ensuring that the metal of his cases is of the correct thickness and hardness to allow this to take place without the case being pierced, not to mention the fact that the priming mixture must be consistent to fantastically minute limits. A variation of .0005 second in one interval of time is "considered excessive." Wow!

No Mean Force

Gases and particles generated by the ignition of the priming charge "touch off" the main propellant charge. This burns rapidly to produce hot gases and here is where the story really starts. An increase of pressure is caused and the case is made to expand and the bullet is forced out of the case. The "heel" of the bullet is expanded to fill the rifling of the barrel and at long last the shot is on its way up the barrel to the target. Let us mention in passing the fact that the bullet material must be of a closely maintained degree of hardness so that the malevolent bands and grooves of the barrel will not "strip" the bullet. A pressure of about nine tons per square inch behind the bullet is no mean force!

At about this point our old friend barrel vibration comes upon the scene. Enough has been written on this subject to fill several books and while there are many experts on this subject I don't think that more than about half a dozen shooters in the country know what really goes on. I am not one of this select band and do not intend to pursue this point. However, as far as I can gather if there is the slightest variation in your bedding, fit of woodwork, sling tension, if you have any loose screws in your 'scope or sight blocks on your barrel, moisture in the forend, etc., etc., etc., then you may as well not have bothered firing—you won't get a bull.

Fantastic though it may seem, this train of events, and others not mentioned, takes about .0035 secs. At the end of this time the bullet finally emerges from the barrel to become a free agent and has only to travel a hundred yards of open air to land in that 1.074in. bull.

Now back to that thing about the "most suitable moment." The only things over which a shooter has control are the way in which he squeezes the trigger and the instant at which he does so. If there is a flat calm all is well, but if there is half a gale blowing, as appears to have been the rule this year this "moment of truth" is of vital importance. If a wind of only 10 m.p.h. catches your shot in the first twenty five yards you are going to be out of that inch bull and into the seven.

Perhaps you can now understand why I am scared stiff. As I become more and more technical-minded I find more and more reasons why the shots I fire should not be bulls. When we consider the minute details which have to be taken into consideration when aiding that little split pea of lead into the inch circle it becomes more and more a mystery to me that we ever hit it. Another mystery is why, when one considers the factors which enter into ammunition manufacture, the ammunition is not at least three times its present price.

And that ends my excursion into matters technical, the information on which I have culled from an excellent publication recently issued by I.C.I. called "Shooting with .22 Rimfire Ammunition." I now intend to try to forget all I have found out of late and concentrate on squeezing the trigger at the right time. Life is simpler that way!

Clay Pigeon Shooting

(Reports and Results appear on page 587)

Fixture List

July 18: Parkstone R. & S.C., Hamworthy, Dorset. Club Shoot, 6 p.m.

July 19: South Norfolk Conservative Association, Open Shoot, Kirby Cave Hall, Nr. Bungay, 6 p.m.

July 19: Kimpton & District Trapshooting Club. Purcell Trophy.

July 19: Cavendish G.C. Belvoir Castle Open Shoot, 2.30 p.m.

July 19: Open Shoot, Kinlet Hall, Bewdley, Worcs.

July 19: Bedford G.C. British Open Skeet Championship.

July 19: C.P.S.A.'s 18th Annual British Open Skeet Championship, Bedford & District G.C., Elstow, Beds., 9.30 a.m.

July 20: North of England Sporting Championship, Harrogate G.C., 1.45 p.m.

July 21-23: N.R.A. Meeting, Bisley Camp, Brookwood, Surrey. Public School Boys' Events.

July 23: Birmingham G.C., Rowney Green, Alvechurch. Members' Shoot, 6 p.m.

July 23: Devon Wildfowlers' Club Shoot, Haldon.

July 23: Coventry & District G.C., Practice Shoot, 7 p.m.

July 23: Cambridgeshire G.C., Moor Barns Farm, Madingley Road, Cambridge. Club Championship Shoot, Gallyon Cup, Nielsen Cup, Cambs. Tankard, 4.30 p.m.

July 24: Bedford & District G.C., Elstow. Crisell Cup.

July 24: Carlisle & District G.C. Cumberland-Westmorland Down-the-Line Championship.

July 25: Childrey C.P.S.C. Club Shoot, Little Coxwell, 6 p.m.

July 25 & 26: Eastern Counties "Open" Sporting Championship, Game Fair, Stetchworth, near Newmarket, 10 a.m. each day.

July 26: Dorset Sporting Championship (100) Blandford & District G.C., 10.30 a.m.

July 26: North Wales D.T.L. Championship, North Wales G.C., Rhosesmor, 9 a.m.

July 27: Parkstone R. & S.C., Hamworthy, Dorset. Club Shoot, 10 a.m.

July 27: Beverley & District G.C., Yorks. Members' Shoot, 2 p.m.

July 27: High Peak G.C., Little Mill Inn, Rowarth, near Stockport. Club Shoot, 10.30 a.m.

July 30: Cavendish G.C., 6.30 p.m.

Aug. 1: Parkstone R. & S.C., Hamworthy, Dorset. Club Shoot, 6 p.m.

Aug. 2: Hampshire Skeet Championship, Boldre & District G.C., Blazemore Farm, Boldre, near Lymington, 1 p.m.

Aug. 2: Blackpool G.C., Greenhalgh, Lancs. Open Shoot, Ball Trap System and Double-Rise, 2.30 p.m.

Aug. 2: Hayfield Gun Club, Members' Shoot, 2 p.m.

Aug. 3: Harrogate G.C., Yorks. Club Shoot, 1.45 p.m.

The Rifle of Tomorrow

by Richard Arnold

THIS is not a forecast of what the rifle will be like in the distant future, nor an attempt to define what its properties will be. The point is that we are living in a transitional period in the history of firearms, exciting times for those who like to trace the development of guns and ammunition.

In spite of the die-hards who oppose each and every innovation in the shooting field, and in contrast to those who hail each and every novelty as something to be adopted, the fact remains that the old idea of what a rifle should look like and do is dying out. What was good enough for granddad is not necessarily good enough for grandson, even though, with every improvement in arms and ammunition given to him, grandson may not equal his grandsire's prowess!

Let's look at the typical single-shot small-bore rifle in England. Nine times out of ten the Martini action predominated, but little by little the bolt-action is beginning to gain ground and there would seem little doubt that in course of time the Martini action will have to take a back seat. The shape of the stock is of great importance, too, but nowadays with the realisation that shooting from the *prone* position does not win international honours, and with the institution and growth of standing and kneeling competitions, it has been realised that a rifle stocked for shooting from a prone position is most unsuitable for use in a standing position. One solution lies in using two or more rifles, but that is expensive, putting shooting beyond the means of the majority of riflemen. There is a better solution. Messrs. Breda introduced an adjustable stock mechanism into their 20-bore semi-automatic shotgun: there is little or no reason why rifles should not be built incorporating a similar device, patents and other regulations permitting, of course.

The wider use of recoil eliminators, compensators and muzzle brakes has brought about a reduction in the weight of rifles, whilst the material from which the stock is made is changing. Walnut, it is agreed, cannot be bettered for wooden stocks, and Italian walnut is the best. But today, with resources of vast industrial and chemical undertaking available to the firearms builder, there is a tendency to turn to plastics, fibre-glass and resinous compounds for stocks, forearms and so forth. Such materials have many advantages over wood, they are lighter, vermin proof (no termite likes the taste of fibre-glass), and are not liable to warping or shrinking. Barrels can be bedded more accurately in them, and, as American research has shown, built with stocks of these materials, a weapon can be made to *float* on water. The old bugbear of excessive oil on the stock from over zealous cleaning and oiling, resulting in sponginess of the wood, is eliminated when plastic or glass stocks are used. The angler has eagerly adopted such materials for his equipment, the motorist and motor-cyclist for vehicle bodies and fairings, and it would seem that the gun trade is set to follow.

A well made barrel nicely blued, or browned, with similar action is a job to behold. But blueing and browning wear off with use (or misuse) and do not protect the weapon against rusting. Remington have introduced weapons with alloy sleeves on the barrels, which are available in golden brown or black. Horrible!—some die-hards will shudder—a verdict, it is unnecessary to add, passed without seeing the weapons. I have seen these arms and they are a joy to behold and bogies of rust or corrosion are defeated. After all Browning are bringing out their shotguns in differing hues. Autumn Gold, Velvet Grey, Black and Gold, Forest Green, are the colours listed. No mere fad either, the guns look good, in particular the Forest Green: and it needs little imagination to see that rifles will soon be built incorporating similar hues.

Often when I have been wildfowling and pigeon shooting, though a neighbouring gunner may be well concealed, I have often seen the flash of light along his gun barrel, giving his position away. A matt surfaced sleeve over the barrel would be a boon to both rifleman and shotgunner.

But if you do not fancy the idea of plastic or glass-fibre stocks, and want to keep your barrel in the conventional blue, why not try a laminated wood stock ? These are very strong, and will be found to be warp free, with shrinkage and swelling kept to a minimum: a very important factor for the rifleman. Laminated wood stocks have a rather unique appearance, even a little bizarre at first sight, as witness the Otto Bruns stocks, in which approximately 1,800 separate glued pieces of contrasting woods, cherry, walnut, or maple, go into the manufacture of one stock blank. The effect is rather startling, somewhat zebra-stripeish, but for the rifleman, in addition to its other properties, such a stock has a good camouflage or disruptive effect in the field. It is rather odd that a sportsman will go to great lengths to camouflage himself, and then expose a highly polished stock from which the light reflects like a heliograph.

As for sights—there is a growing tendency for the telescope sight to be adopted: the aperture sight simplified sighting and shooting, by giving the sportsman only two objects to line up, target and foresight. The telescope sight does away with this eye juggling, as the image of the sighting reticule and target are brought into the same plane, the eye has only to focus on that plane.

So, little by little, we shall gradually see the old idea of materials from which rifles are constructed fall into disuse and new, modern ones take their place. It is only a natural process, even the colouring of the barrels and receivers blue, or gold, or green. The processes are new, but the idea is as old as firearms. If you don't believe me, consider that the first rifles and other arms were completed in the white, russetting and browning came later, then blueing. As for green and other tints in the decorative work on the weapon — in the Victoria and Albert Museum there are excellent examples of early firearms, wheel-locks and flintlocks, from Germany, France and Italy, in which the stocks are inlaid with mother-of-pearl and stag horn. Quite often these horn inserts were stained, green being a popular choice. Even in the middle of the seventeenth century many gun and pistol stocks were also built of several pieces, or even laminated, whilst the figuring of the wood was artificially heightened by charring the surface over a flame. Tortoiseshell was used for decorative effects, as well as ivory.

I do not doubt, for one moment, that the old masters would have used fibre-glass or alloys if they could have obtained them. The gunmakers of today who use modern substances and stain their actions green or gold are carrying on the traditions of the masters, meanwhile catering for a larger but less monied market.

☆

GUN GOSSIP

by Top Wad

AT the National Rifle Association's Bisley Meeting, now drawing to a close for another year, amongst the many cups and trophies presented is a silver medal given by the Armourers' Company for annual competition. This medal commemorates the work of the Reverend Alexander John Forsyth, and its presentation this year is almost coincident with the publication of a new edition of his biography, a copy of which has been kindly sent to me by the great-grandniece of the Doctor, Miss M. F. Pirie.*

To Dr. Forsyth belongs the undisputed merit of having invented the percussion lock, and of being the first to substitute fulminate for flint as a means of igniting a charge of gunpowder. It is hardly necessary to stress the importance of his invention which revolutionised the mechanism of firearms of all calibres—born in 1768, he lived in the heyday of the flintlock—and when he patented his lock on July 4, 1807, the following principal advantages over the old method of ignition were justly claimed.

The rapid and complete inflammation of the whole of the charge of gunpowder in the chamber of the barrel. The prevention of the loss of force through the touch-hole. Perfect security against rain or damp in the priming. No flash from the pan, and less risk of accidental discharge of the piece than when the common lock is used. The charge of gunpowder to be from one-third to one-fourth less than when the flintlock is made use of.

These improvements were the outcome of a day's wildfowling some years before. Noticing that many birds escaped by diving as soon as they spotted the flash from the pan of his flintlock fowling piece, the Doctor covered the lock with a sighted hood which later developed into his percussion lock. He contended that although work of this nature might appear to have little connection with his duties as a minister, it brought him into frequent and close touch with his parishioners, and in this he was undoubtedly right, for amongst them there must have been a goodly number of fowlers in those distant and sporting parts of Aberdeenshire.

The story of Dr. Forsyth and his lock is not a happy one. All along the line he had to contend with prejudice and a pigheaded Ordnance Department. A few sportsmen were honestly against the lock, but many gunmakers and others whose interests were affected did all they could to injure the invention. By 1820, however, all classes of sportsmen had been won over, including even the staunchest of flint fans, Hawker himself, though the army would still have no part of it. It was not until 1834 that an official test between flint and percussion muskets was made at Woolwich, when the latter won the day hands down.

The shabby treatment that Dr. Forsyth received from a short-sighted government and the country's ingratitude to the pioneer of percussion make this shameful story worth reading quite apart from the interesting ballistic history that it contains. Gun and armament makers in this country have ever been notoriously slow to experiment with and adopt new ideas. One would have thought that the Forsyth story should have provided a sufficiently strong warning against bumbledom and the danger of foreign competition.

It only remains to reflect how fortunate it was that the Reverend Alexander Forsyth was a patriot and a minister. Otherwise the battle of Waterloo might have swung the other way, for £20,000 is a very tempting offer.

*Copies obtainable from Miss M. F. Pirie, 23 Beechgrove Terrace, Aberdeen, price 5s. 6d., including postage.

THE N.S.R.A.'s BISLEY MEETING

WILDFOWLING CLUBS

The Wildfowlers' Association of Great Britain and Ireland: Hon. Secretary, Lt.-Commdr. J. W. Anderton, 19 Castle Street, Liverpool, 2.

HON. SECRETARY'S NOTES

The hon. secretary will be away from August 2 to August 18, and the hon. treasurer from July 25 to August 11.

✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Executive Committee will be held at the Grand Hotel, Birmingham, on Saturday, September 6, next, at 2 o'clock in the afternoon.

Sub Committee and Club Secretaries are requested to forward items that they wish included in the agenda and these should reach me not later than August 18.

Committee members will receive a copy of the agenda not later than August 25.

There will be a meeting of the Executive Sub Committees at 10.30 a.m.

✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

1959 A.G.M. AND DINNER

The 1959 A.G.M. and dinner of this Association will be held at Blackpool in March through the courtesy of the Fylde W.A.

✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

New official Association ties and badges will be obtainable from the hon. treasurer (cheque or postal order to accompany order) as from August next. Prices: Car badges, 25s. 6d. Tie (Terylene, with mallard motifs), navy blue or maroon background, 17s. 6d. Tie (wool appearance, depicting hand-woven mallard), navy blue or maroon background, 15s. Blazer badges: Thread, 12s. 6d.; wire, 37s. 6d. Lapel badges, 3s.

✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

Change of officials:—

North Lincolnshire W.C. The late secretary, Mr. R. A. Taylor has assumed the chair, the new hon. secretary being: Mr. G. Cook (9 Craven Road, Cleethorpes, Lincs).

Southport & District W.A. New secretary: Mr. J. E. Thomas (Inchcape, Alt Road, Hightown, Nr. Liverpool, Lancs).

Sunderland & Durham W.A. New secretary: Mr. W. Cheeseborough (27 Farnham Terrace, High Barnes, Sunderland, Co. Durham).

* * *

CLUB REPORTS

The second annual general meeting of the Darlington and District Wildfowling and Gun Club took place on June 18 at the Red Lion Hotel, Priestgate, Darlington. The chairman, Mr. E. S. J. Standen, presided, and on behalf of all members welcomed Mr. John W. Cowan, one of the Club's vice-presidents, and congratulated him on his recent brilliant successes at clay pigeon shooting. Mr. Cowan won the North of England D.T.L. Championship for the second year in succession, a feat which had never before been performed by anyone. 'Big John' also carried off the All Counties D.T.L. Trophy and was runner-up in the All England D.T.L. Championship. This news was received with great approbation and Mr. Cowan thanked the members.

The minutes of the last A.G.M. and the last ordinary meeting were read and approved after which the secretary, treasurer, and chairman gave their reports. In brief, the Club has had a very eventful and successful year and the funds are in a healthy condition.

The chairman then declared all offices vacant and the election of officers for the ensuing year were elected as follows: President, Sir Fergus Graham, Bart., K.B.E., M.P.; Vice-Presidents, Mr. John W. Cowan; Brigadier C. D. Marley, D.S.O., O.B.E., T.D., D.L.; Rt. Hon. The Lord Barnard, C.M.G., O.B.E., M.C., T.D., D.L.; Colonel Sir Leonard Ropner, Bart., M.C., M.P.; and Mr. E. S. J. Standen. Chairman, Mr. H. R. Moules. Secretary, Mr. P. J. Wright. Vice-Chairmen, Messrs. Standen and D. Bulman. Asst. Secretary, Mr. J. D. Haithewaite. Treasurer, Mr. C. Foster. Liason Officer, Mr. C. L. Eccles (Hon. Secretary South Durham and N. Yorks W.A.). Rifle and Clay Committee, Messrs. J. W. Cowan, W. S. Elliott, D. Williams. Pistol Section, Mr. P. J. Wright. Duck rearing Committee, Messrs. Standen, J. Cook, A. B. Hill, W. Hodgson, and N. Leith. Press and Publicity, Mr. Standen. Pest Control Committee, Messrs. C. Ansbro, C. P. Thompson, G. Wilson. Library Committee, Messrs. J. W. Cross, D. Bulman. Entertainments Committee, Messrs. C. Ansbro, J. D. Haithwaite, C. Thompson. N.E. Joint Council Reps., Messrs. Wright, Standen and Hill.

Following the election, a lively discussion took place regarding the future of the Club wildfowl sanctuary and duck-rearing. Mr. Standen exhorted the Club to continue to support this venture and to continue to uphold the principles of W.A.G.B.I. and this was agreed to. Mr. Standen also drew the attention of all members to the fact that this was the Golden Jubilee year of W.A.G.B.I. and asked everyone to support him in a fund-raising scheme he would put forward at the next meeting. It was also agreed that a dinner should be held later in the year.

On June 21 Messrs. Standen, Hill and Hodgson of the Duck Rearing Committee journeyed to Liverpool, where they co-operated with Messrs. John Ruxton and Jim Scott in catching up some Canada geese on Lord Derby's estate. The whole venture was a complete success, and in spite of the vilest weather, the birds were caught, basketed and transported to various parts of the country to form the nucleus of breeding stocks in an endeavour to increase the numbers of these majestic birds. Our greatest thanks are due to the Earl of Derby, his agent, Major Evans, and his staff for their co-operation and help.

Dates for the next meetings are as follows: July 16 and 30, August 13 and 27. All to be held at the Red Lion Hotel, Priestgate, Darlington, at 7.30 p.m. prompt. Certain lectures and demonstrations are being arranged for these meetings and all members are asked to support them. A trip to the Clubs' sanctuary and rearing-pen is also to be arranged for the near future.

* * *

The Leigh Wildfowlers' Association met at their headquarters, the Crooked Billet, Leigh-on-Sea, on July 4, and were given a most interesting, and, at times, amusing lecture by Mr. Robert Spencer, head of the bird-ringing organisation at the British Museum (Natural History). Dealing particularly with wildfowl, Mr. Spencer outlined the aims and methods of the ringing scheme, described some of the results, and impressed members especially with his account of the work being carried out all over the world on this branch of bird study.

The next meeting of the Association will be the annual general meeting to be held on Friday, August 1 at the Crooked Billet.

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GUNDOG NEWS

Conducted by P. R. A. MOXON, Beoley Kennels, Redditch, Worcs.

IT is frequently difficult for the owner-trainer to give his gundog exactly the kind of experience that it requires at a particular stage of training. In the case of the novice owner, he may not *know* what sort of experience is needed, and the experienced man may know what the dog should have, but be unable to arrange for it. However, in most cases a little thought will provide a solution, even if it is an improvised one. Quite a lot of really practical help can be given to the pupil by artificial means.

For instance, the " rolling rabbit," beloved by Dick Sharpe, can be used a few times to simulate the sudden appearance of a rabbit scuttling across the dog's path. A very tempting object is this " rabbit," which simply consists of a disc of wood about six to eight inches in diameter and one and a half inches thick. Bowled across short turf by an unseen assistant (or by the handler from behind the dog) it can be made to bounce and jump in a most realistic fashion with a little practice.

Another improvisation which may prove helpful is the use of a rolling ball or the dummy attached to a long piece of string to give a dog confidence and experience in stopping and picking up moving objects — with the aim of giving confidence on runners or live birds. Some dogs are very unwilling to tackle their first few runners, usually because they have absorbed their steadiness lessons and have been given the impression that once a bird or rabbit moves it is not for them.

The point of training when a dog is suddenly introduced to runners and expected to pick them up must be most bewildering to the pupil. It appears a complete contradiction to all previous training, and it sometimes surprises me that we meet with any success at all. With experience, of course, an intelligent dog quickly learns to differentiate between the scent of wounded and unwounded game, and will turn away from the latter, whilst dealing with the former quite effectively when called upon to do so. All trainers have noticed — and little wonder at it—that after being introduced to its first live bird or two, most dogs tend to lose steadiness and require careful watching in this respect.

The Question of Runners

Many unfortunate occurrences take place in the shooting field with a young dog, some of which do a great deal of damage to previous training, and may even lead to the ruination of the pupil.. Again to take the question of runners, there can be no guarantee that your dog will not find a strong old cock pheasant, slightly winged, which, if not dealt with expertly, may inflict a nasty wound with its spurs, so putting the dog off live game for some considerable time, if not for life. So far as is possible, the wise trainer will not send his dog for a strong cock until it has had sufficient experience on less dangerous quarry. Of course, even an old cock might successfully picked up and retrieved the first time, but it is always chancy.

Even the vermin birds, and most certainly grey squirrels, can give a dog quite a nasty shock if they have any life left in them. It is wise, therefore, to experience a retrieving gundog on live birds when pigeon shooting, if possible, or when partridge shooting.

Even water work can be dangerous—in more ways than one. I have known a wounded duck to give a young retriever quite a fright and a peck that it long remembered. Such an experience may not only discourage a dog from picking live game, but might also produce a dislike of water, which could take a long time to overcome. Water-shyness can be produced in other ways, too. If, for instance, an inexperienced swimmer becomes entangled in a submerged branch, or a strand of wire, such as may be found in many ponds and rivers, the panic and consequent ducking will provide very unpleasant associations with water in the dog's mind. These things apply with particular force to nervous or highly-strung dogs, and should be borne in mind when carrying out the summer water training.

The retriever most of its time at heel, whilst the spaniel quests.

A Cry from the Heart

Damage to education can be caused in so many ways that it seems rather marvellous that we see any good dogs at all. One of the commonest posers set me—a realy heartcry—by shooting men is, "What can I do about my dog's steadiness, as all the other dogs on the shoot run-in and chase like mad? " I have dealt with this before, and I can only repeat that you must either persuade the other guns to steady their dogs or leave them at home, or leave your own behind when you know it will be subjected to such temptation.

If, however, you are sufficiently strong minded and enthusiastic about training, you will overcome the trouble by concentrating more upon your own dog and less upon the shooting. One of the hardest things in the world for the keen shooting man to do, I know, but surely not impossible. After all, one of the objects for which we strive is to produce a dog capable of withstanding strong temptations?

By the very nature of the work they are doing and their nearness to the handler at times of temptation, it is much easier to handle a retriever among wild dogs than it is to manage a spaniel. If several of you are out shooting, all working keen spaniels, and one starts to chase or run-in, the chances are that all the others will follow suit.

These dogs are working most of the time at some distance from the handler — frequently much *too* far—and the control that the handler can exercise over his dog diminishes as the distance increases. Thus, whilst a dog walking at heel, or questing close in front of the gun, can usually be prevented from joining a " free-for-all " by command or prompt action on the part of the handler, the wide ranging dog, steady though it may be under normal circumstances, is almost bound to succumb.

Distance For Working Spaniel

This, very conveniently, brings me to the subject of the distance at which a spaniel should be worked. I am frequently asked to give a hard and fast" yardage " range for spaniels, usually by men who are taking over a new dog or who are training their first spaniel. It is, naturally, quite impossible to give a definite ruling. Much depends upon the type of ground being worked, the species and amount of game thereon, the direction of the wind and scenting conditions, and upon the reliance that can be placed in the spaniel concerned.

It is generally accepted that a spaniel to quest " within gunshot range " or its handler, but this is a loose explanation, for a dog at forty yards would still be within gunshot but any game it flushed would immediately be out of shot!

I am no lover of the spaniel which potters around your feet the whole time. Such a dog normally has a poor nose, and in any event you could kick up as much game as it will find. At the other extreme, I dislike the dog which works so far out that it has constantly to be whistled and recalled, although I prefer this type to the potterer.

The sensible arrangement is to try to keep your spaniel within such a range that anything that it flushes will be *well* within gunshot. In open country—such as rough grass, long stubble or heather—it is safer to allow a wider range than you would in covert, brambles or bracken, where the dog can so easily get out of sight and be a far way away before you realise it. When hunting hedgrerows, the spaniel should not be allowed to get too far ahead for obvious reasons, and should be encouraged to weave in and out, in order that you may keep an eye on it and also the better to beat the cover.

When working downwind, any spaniel will tend to range farther out and beat back towards you into the wind, a circumstance which must always be allowed for. On bad scenting days your dog may work more slowly and closer than on a good-scenting day, when it may be tempted to get too far ahead on hot lines, and require your careful attention. Sometimes scent is rising, so do not be surprised if on occasions your spaniel works with head held high. Only a couple of nights ago I was interested to watch my spaniels in the pen practically standing upon their hind legs to sniff the air above the clumps of rough grass wherein the rabbits have their " forms."

Writing of spaniel handling brings to mind the remarks I have heard several times about spaniel handlers being so much more noisy than the retriever people. This is possibly true, and arises from the fact that the spaniel is doing the job of two dogs and, by the very nature of its work, requires more handling at certain times. Critics should remember that an orthodox no-slip retriever spends 75 per cent of its time either at heel or waiting at a drive, only coming into

operation when something is shot for it to find, whereas the questing spaniel is at work *all the time*. Also, the spaniel is subjected to much more temptation throughout its shooting day than the retriever.

Noisy handling is a fault from which we all suffer at times—spaniel and retriever men alike. Much can be done by using whistles of a quiet type and accustoming dogs from the start of training to obey *low* whistles and commands. Unfortunately, in the excitement of the moment discretion usually gets the better of us, and we roar or blast a command many times louder than necessary. A dog's hearing is exceptionally keen (except when it does not *want* to hear!) and there is no doubt that most of the time we both speak and whistle much more loudly than we need, especially on still days or when the dog is down-wind of us.

I have conducted various experiments with the "silent" type of whistle, and have been amazed at the distances at which dogs can hear it, even when set on a quiet note and blown softly. The only drawback to this sort of whistle is that many people feel rather ineffectual when blowing it—I do myself—but the dog can hear it under normal conditions up to any distance at which a gundog is likely to be worked.

Myxomatosis

by Taproot

MYXOMATOSIS was reported to be still smouldering a few miles from here in early March and one morning, out exercising, I came on an advanced case drooling in the middle of the tarmac. Dismounting I used the head of my whip to put the sufferer out of this world. Horses hate the smell of blood and my chestnut began making that extraordinary rattle in his nostrils which his kind sometimes produce for a theatrical display of alarm. With an equivalent shudder I then scooped the body into the ditch with the toe of my boot. Many of us still shrink from touching myxomatosis in spite of all the assurances that it is quite harmless to man. I think my revulsion is fed by the suspicion that the disease is slightly changing its characteristics which is an acknowledged possibility with many viruses and can produce unpredictable results.

Since that morning many carcases have turned up on the farm, but at the same time several broods of healthy young rabbits are flourishing near at hand. It may be that the stock is now too thin on the ground for the wildfire spread of the first onslaught, but I am inclined to the theory that the vector fleas are less numerous to carry the infection. The side effects observable on victims have definitely changed. Distortion round the face and eyes is less pronounced as are also the swellings at the other end of the body. But the deadliness is the same.

Assessing Crop Damage

I am prodded by two letters in our issue of June 27 from J. F. G. T. and D. A. Woolley to emphasise once again the importance of assessing damage to crops in the right way.

When pheasants attack a freshly-sown field of corn the value of the grain consumed may be very small, but if, as often happens, their feeding is concentrated just outside a covert or in some favoured spot to the extent of making the plant patchy when it comes up, the subsequent loss of crop may be considerable. Much larger quantities of grain eaten at harvest time will cost the farmer far less by comparison. J. F. G. T.'s citation of W. E. Collinge's analysis must not be taken to mean that the 2.4% of grain found in the diet of a number of birds examined proves that their harmful effect on farming is negligible.

I point this out in no carping spirit, but because I believe that good relations between farmers and game preservers are much enhanced by a frank admission that game does at times do serious damage. One keeper round here is disarmingly ready to plead guilty on behalf of his birds. The result is that complaints are never lodged unnecessarily by the tenants, and are invariably resolved by feeding the birds away from the trouble-spot.

With regard to D. A. Woolley's letter about the wood pigeon I want to wind up by once again plugging one point which everybody connected with this bird, whether he be shooter or long-suffering farmer, ought to bear in mind. Pigeon-damage has been rendered far more controlable during the past five years by the invention of the carbide bird-scarer. Various brands are on the market all fairly efficient and producing at least one loud report a minute. This is enough to protect completely a five-acre field all the time the gadget is in operation. In practice however there are snags. The machines sometimes give trouble owing to blockages in small-guage nipples of the Primus stove variety and there are seasonal difficulties about using them for all the hours of daylight.

In summer pigeon come off roost and go to feed at 4 a.m. (so I'm told) when the keenest agriculturalists are still abed. In winter the water in the thing is apt to freeze.

The completely fool-proof invention that will run for days untended may not be so very far away. If it comes in time one of our most sporting birds may be saved from a more lethal form of control.

Round Our Way—XVI

Roly's Night Out

by Walter McIntire

AFTER last night's hot-pot Roly Bate says he can't get back to sea quick enough. And as Sergeant Coot is going about with a mean look saying that things round our way get complicated when Roly's at home, you might think there had been something serious going on and you'd be wrong. It wasn't anybody's fault but somehow things just happen when Roly's about.

It was a real good hot-pot and pretty well everyone turned up. This year we had it at the Victory Rooms at Barrington after the committee had each voted for having it at the place nearest his own home. We've found it best to hold it straight after the season ends so that a good moon or the next morning's flight won't put people off.

We had a good feed and some good speeches from Sir Alfred and the Chairman of another Club and we met a lot of old friends and had plenty of beer.

Tom Groom, our Secretary, is a good bloke. He'd made most of the arrangements but went down with flu three days before and really he shouldn't have come at all. But he dosed himself with Scotch and seemed to be enjoying himself until about 10.30 when he passed out. That was where Roly's troubles started.

I was with him at the time and I helped get Tom to the door. Roly found Tom's car and opened it up somehow and we half carried Tom to it. Once inside, he just said, "Thanks a lot," and went to sleep. Roly said he'd drive Tom to town and then get the last bus home so I went back to the hot-pot and it wasn't until this evening in Todd's—which is, of course, The Black Prince—that I knew anything had gone wrong.

The Bishop, Taffy and I were sitting round the fire talking over the hot-pot when Alf joined us. "What's Roly been playing at?" he asked. So I told him what I knew. Then he said Sergeant Coot had been in for a haircut earlier on and had been belly-aching about Roly but hadn't been very clear why. Just then Roly came in and got his beer and sat down just looking at us. Finally he said, "Roll on!" and took a big swig, following up with the statement about getting back to sea.

Usually Pretty Cheerful

Now Roly is usually pretty cheerful so Taffy said, "You got married or somethin'?"

"Flippin' do last night," Roly began. "I'd never met Tom's wife before. She kept calling me Mr. Meadows. We got Tom into a chair and he said he'd get up to bed later. When I offered to put the car away, Tom's wife said, 'But it's yours!' I said I'd never had a car and she said, 'But aren't you Jack Meadows?' I said, 'No,' and then she started apologising. I didn't know Tom had got rid of his old one to Meadows and had gone to Barrington in a new one. I told her I'd still got time to take the car back to the hotpot as Jack Meadows would probably still be there and I'd get somebody to run Tom's car back too if she'd give me a key. I had to start up again with a bit of bent wire like I did when I fetched it for Tom at the hotpot.

Anyway, I started back and half way to Barrington a police car squeezed me into the roadside. They asked a lot of silly questions and took me back to town. One of them drove Meadows' car.

Alf had started laughing but Roly looked very hurt. "It wasn't funny for me," he said. "Not one bit. Meadows had meant to go home early. But when he found his car missing he phoned Sergeant Coot. Coot was having an early night and had to get up and cycle over to Barrington and then phone the County Police. Anyway, they let me go after a lot of telephoning and I agreed to take the car to Meadows' house which as you know is on the edge of Barrington village. Meadows was very decent about it and even offered to run me home. But I'd got to get Tom's car then. I walked to the car park and found it all by itself. I couldn't take it to town then as it was too late to get a bus back, so I started for home.

Roly stopped and took another long drink.

"It's only two miles—going crow fashion. It's five by road. And on the way I passed someone cycling. It must have been Sergeant Coot. You've got to hand it to him—he's thorough. He'd seen Tom's car in Barrington and knew from Meadows who the owner was. He knew Tom had gone home ill, but there was Tom's car belting *this* way. Not towards town. So he knocked up Graham the farmer on the high road and you can guess the rest.

I got up and bought Roly another beer.

"Go on," said the Bishop.

"The police stopped me half a mile from home," said Roly. "I'll never drive another chap's car as long as I live. Give me the sea, there's no coppers there!"

Alf said, "They didn't take you to town again?"

"Didn't they just!" said Roly. "Police doctor, drink test, the lot! We had a rare old time."

"You weren't drunk?" said Taffy.

"No," said Roly grinning. "It might have been worth it if I had been."

Clay Pigeon Shooting

(The C.P.S. Fixture List is on page 581)

Reports and Results

The 24th annual International Tournament was held at Harrogate on June 27 and 28 and resulted as follows :

Event 1.—International Team Match, teams of 30, each member shooting 100 birds, points scoring, 3 and 2, 10 best scores in each team to count : 1, England, 2,860/3,000 points ; 2, Scotland, 2,795 ; 3, Wales, 2,765 ; 4, Ireland, 2,732.

High Guns. High Gun of the Match, E. R. Bruce, 298/300.

England : 1, E. Fear, 296 ; 2, A. Poskitt, 294 ; 3, J. R. Braithwaite, 287.

Ireland : 1, P. O'Callaghan, 286 ; 2, C. Ingram, 277 ; 3, F. Edwards, 276.

Scotland : 1, E. R. Bruce, 298 ; 2, R. A. Young, 280 ; 3, T. Sim, 280.

Wales : 1, G. T. Jones, 288 ; 2, D. T. Jones, 279 ; 3, W. W. Evans, 277.

Event 2.—"Mackintosh" Trophy (postal) Match, as for Event 1 : 1, Australia, 2,876 (High Gun, W. J. Rutty, 296/300) ; 2, Canada (S.B.), 2,862 (High Gun, J. Boa, 297/300) ; 3, England, 2,860 (High Gun, E. Fear, 296/300) ; 4, New Zealand, 2,848 (High Gun, J. R. Thomson, 288/300) ; 5, Scotland, 2,795 (High Gun, E. R. Bruce, 298/300) ; 6, Wales, 2,765 (High Gun, G. Jones, 288/300) ; 7, South Africa, 2,764 (High Gun, J. Moni, 291/300) ; 8, Ireland, 2,732 (High Gun, P. O'Callaghan, 286/300) ; 9, Central Africa, 2,548 (High Gun, J. Davies, 275/300).

Event 3.—"Elliott Alves" Trophy : 1, Wales, 2,765 ; 2, Ireland, 2732.

Event 4.—Captains' Cup : 1, E. R. Bruce (Scotland), 298 ; 2, T. E. Sanders (Wales), 275 ; 3, T. S. Bamber (England), 270 ; 4, G. Clarke (Ireland), 245.

Event 5.—British Open Championship, 100 birds, points scoring 3 and 2 : 1, J. Wheater, 296/300 points ; 2, H. B. Smith, 294.

Class A : E. Horlock, F. G. Kelly and F. Nixon, 293 ; E. Fear and J. R. Wensley, 292 ; R. D. Browning and W. Heald, 291.

Class B : W. Blamire, 292 ; W. T. Jones and T. E. Beevers, 291 ; D. Finer, 290 ; P. R. Rogers, 288 ; W. Roy and J. Norval, 286.

Class C : K. P. Taylor, 286 ; M. Snodgrass and T. Southern, 285 ; A. Boyd, 280 ; C. Pendleton, C. D. Lindsay, and C. Wilson 277.

Event 6.—Governor-General's Trophy, shot concurrently with the first 50 birds of Event 5, teams of 15, best 10 in each to count : 1, England "A", 1,465/1,500 points ; 2, England "B", 1,441 ; 3, Scotland, 1,425 ; 4, Wales, 1,422 ; 5, Ireland, 1,396.

Event 7.—High Gun of the Meeting (aggregate over the two days) : 1, E. Fear (England), 588/600 points ; 2, E. R. Bruce (Scotland), 586.

* * *

The fourth Annual Sporting Championship organised by the **Childrey Clay Pigeon Shooting Club,** incorporating the Berks, Bucks and Oxon and Wilts Area Sporting Championship and Open, was held once again in very bad weather, on a very wet and windy May 24 at Lodge Farm, Childrey, Wantage, Berks., by kind permission of Mr. G. C. Matthews.

The meeting over 100 birds, in stages of grouse, teal, walk-up, partridges and high pheasants, attracted 40 guns, and in view of the weather this was an excellent entry. Some of the competitors, having left home in the early morning in Sunshine and fair weather, came unprepared for the day that followed, which not only caused the clays to be very erratic, but made conditions under foot very poor. Vehicles got stuck and an alternative way out had to be found for the cars. Tribute must be paid to the trappers who stuck it out all day, in bad conditions, and to their trapping, which was of a very high standard in spite of the wind. The scorers and referees must also be thanked for weathering the storms. An excellent bar and refreshment tent made things a lot better on return to the entries tent.

The Open Sporting Championship was won by K. Raines, of West Challow, Wantage, Berks, with a score of 90 out of a possible 100. He also won the Berks, Bucks, Oxon and Wilts Area Sporting Championship, and thus took the Childrey Challenge Cup, the I.C.I. Shield and Medal and added prize. Runner-up was P. H. Fussell with a score of 88 ex 100. Other Class A winners were: C. E. Shrubb, 82 ex 100; J. F. Whidbourne 79; F. Cooper 78, and C. Wordley 78, after a shoot-off for 5th and 6th places. The C. V. Burls Challenge Trophy for Class B was won by K. B. Berry, of Coleshill, with a score of 82 ex-100. Runner-up was L. J. Lippiatt with a score of 81. Other Class B winners: J. A. Baigent 80; W. K. Parker 76; M. Pearce 70; A. Spalding 67, after a shoot off with A. Gladwin for 6th place.

A special Open Novice and Gamekeepers' Class was won by A. J. Barclay of Little Baldon, Oxon, with a score of 29 ex 50. Second in this Class was J. White with a score of 27. The Colts Prize was won by J. R. Baigent Jnr., with a score of 36 ex 50. The I.C.I. Novice Tankard was won by H. Bush of Wilts. The CPSA Plaque for the High Gun on High Pheasants was won by R. C. W. Kinch of Buscot with a score of 19 ex 20.

During the day D.T.L. Pool Shooting was in progress.

The prizes were presented by Mrs. John White, of Little Faringdon, who was introduced by K. G. Handy, chairman of the Club, and thanked by the hon. sec., E. C. Cutler, who called for three cheers for Mrs. White and a "whisper."

* * *

On Wednesday, June 25, The Gunmakers' Association Ltd., Novices' Competition, Eastern Area Shoot, was held at the **Cambridgeshire Gun Club's** shooting grounds, Moor Barns Farm, Madingley, Cambs.

The competition—25 birds "D.T.L."—was contested by ten guns. Scoring: 2 points for 1st barrel kill, 1 point for 2nd barrel kill. First Prize £6 was won by Ian Harrison, aged 13 years, of Sedgford, Kings Lyn, with the excellent score of 43 x 50 points. Second Prize £4, was won by H. F. J. Rose, East Bergholt, Colchester, with 42 points.

The prize winners go forward for the final shoot to be held over 40 birds in conjunction with the British Open Skeet Championship at the Bedford and District Gun Club's shooting grounds, Elstow, Beds., on July 19 next.

After the tea break the Cambridgeshire Gun Club held a Skeet Shoot (on handicap) consisting of two rounds of skeet (40 birds). Seventeen guns attended. The handicap was won by Mr. J. W. Smith with a score of 48. High Gun was Mr. D. B. Hare, with 36 x 40 kills; each received a silver spoon. The prizes were very kindly presented by Mrs. Gallyon. The weather which had been very good during the afternoon, changed later and rain was falling as the last squad was going round.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS — *continued from page 588*

SHOPPING BY POST

CANDLEWICK BEDSPREADS, "Kosywol," direct from the mills, 90in. x 100in., £2/7/0, state colour; "Kosywol" travelling rugs, 54in. x 60in., £2/7/0, postage paid; advertising offer.—The Lancashire and Yorkshire Products Co., Stockport Road, Mossley, Manchester.

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OPEN SHOOT, 10 bird and double rise, cash prizes, July 20, 2 p.m.—Norfolk Arms, Ringinglow, Sheffield.

PEVENSEY GUN CLUB. Clay Pigeon Shoot Sunday, July 20, 50 D.t.l. 10.30, 40 Skeet 2.30. New Barn Farm, Hooe (turn off at Lam Inn, Eastbourne-Bexhill road).

PICCADILLY GUN CLUB. D.T.L. 100 bird A B C classes, Bank Holiday Monday, August 4, at 1 p.m. Good cash prizes.—Hatfield, Woodhouse, nr. Doncaster.

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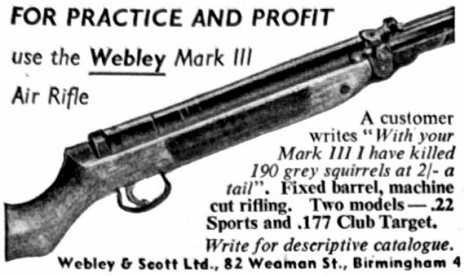

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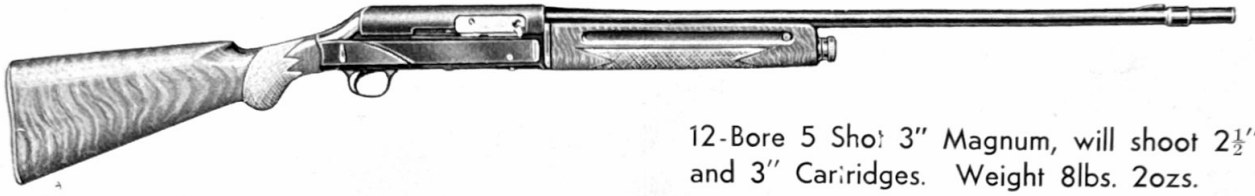

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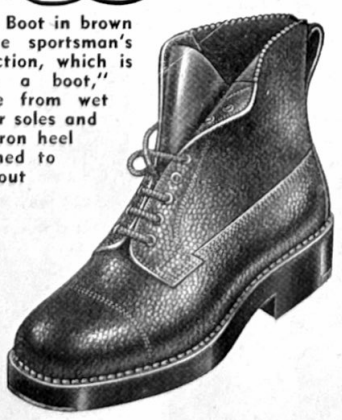

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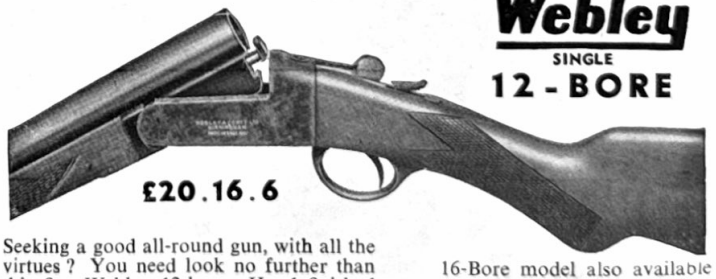

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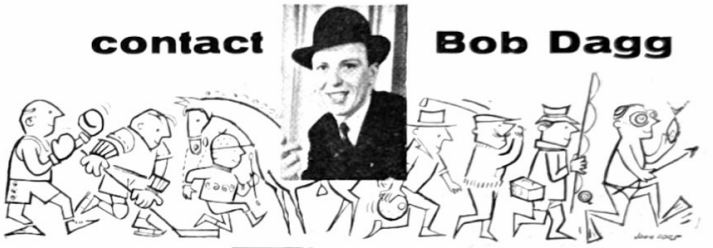

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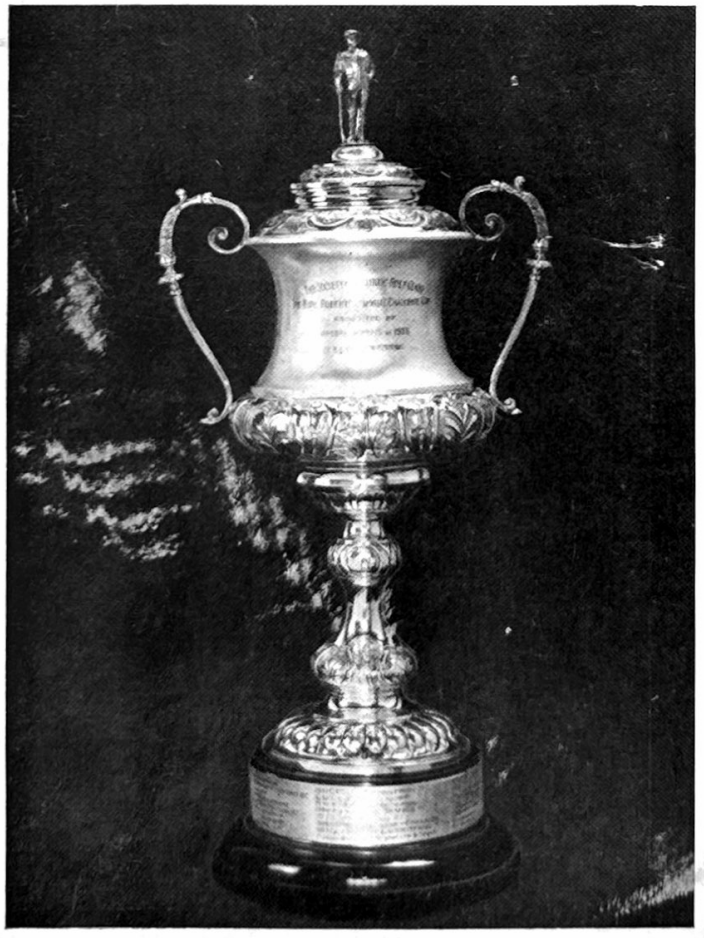

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